WALKS ABOUT ZION

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WALKS ABOUT ZION

Ten Lectures

BY

I. M. ATWOOD, D.D.

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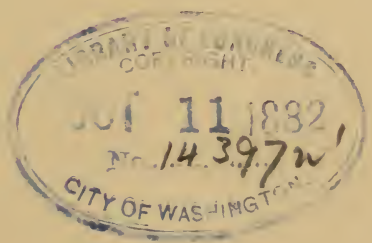

BOSTON
UNIVERSALIST PUBLISHING HOUSE
1882

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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge.

PREFACE.

THE Lectures here presented to the public were prepared in the regular course of the Author's ministry, — (1) to afford his people the opportunity to look more at large over the wide field of religious administration and effort; and (2) to give his hearers their pastor's point of view in taking such a survey. The reasons which have influenced to publish the discourses are precisely those which led to their preparation originally; namely, to present the facts and the considerations essential to a just opinion of the value of the different denominations of Christians, and to offer to those who may be interested to know it, or possibly benefited by knowing it, the view which the Author takes of a common but by no means unimportant subject of meditation. It is scarcely needful to add that the Lectures make no pretensions to any merits, historical or literary, beyond the very humble ones named above.

I. M. A.

CANTON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL,
August, 1882.

LC Control Number
tmp96 028895

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I.

THE GOOD AND EVIL OF SECTS.

"*There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*" — 1 Cor. xii. 5.

WALKS ABOUT ZION.

THE GOOD AND EVIL OF SECTS.

I AM going on a tour of friendly observation among the different Christian churches of our section of the country. I shall not visit every one, but the more important ones. Those passed in review will be recognized as the chief sects in numbers or in influence, not only in New England but in the country generally. The Reformed (Dutch) Church and the Lutheran Church, both of them quite numerous and strong in some other sections, are not included in my scheme of pastoral visitation. But so far as their faith and order are concerned, they are sufficiently comprehended for my purposes in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. The Free-will Baptists agree in doctrine with the Methodists, and in ceremonial peculiarity with the regular Baptists; so that they do not call for separate mention. The Disciples or Campbellites, though numerous in the Southwest, can scarcely be called an

influential sect. The Spiritualists, to whom I devote the closing lecture of the series, do not profess to be a Christian sect at all.

It is now more than twenty years since I began my ministry. Born and reared in a Calvinistic church, I early forsook it for a sort of middle-ground between Christianity and Theism. Soon I gravitated to Universalism, and in its faith and service have spent the whole period of my majority. My ministry has been passed in three different States, and in twice that number of sharply-differing communities. Fifteen years of it have gained for me the experience of an editor in addition to that of a minister, — an experience of great value as bringing me into relations of close knowledge of, if not of intimate fellowship with, the literature and the leading men of all the other sects.

I trust I have not been misled in thinking I might be able, after so much professional experience, much of it gained under exceptionally favorable opportunities for forming correct opinions on such matters, to speak intelligently and instructively of the doctrines, polities, and tendencies of my own and of sister churches. At any rate, I will try to speak sincerely and fairly.

In this lecture it is proposed to clear the way to a just understanding of the general subject as well as render it easier to deal with in its several

parts, by considering the good and evil of many sects.

There are many persons who say, and doubtless there are many more who think, that the existence of so many differing sects in Christendom is a discredit to Christianity; certainly a disadvantage. They say that if Christians were agreed among themselves, that fact would furnish to unbelievers a powerful practical proof of the truth of our religion, and a captivating example of the unity and concord for which it professes to stand. But the multitude of sects into which the Christian church is split, and especially the fact that some of them hold to dogmas which others expressly repudiate, while no generalization known to the laws of thought begins to be comprehensive enough to cover and group the peculiarities of any half-dozen of them, joined to the further fact that in all former ages, and even in our own, the members of the various sects have often lived in relations the reverse of confidential and fraternal, have the effect to produce on the mind of the spectator an unhappy impression of human confusion and unsanctified passions.

The first thing to be said about this multitude of differing and often hostile sects is, that it is a necessary incident of man's religious evolution. It would be better, obviously, if all Christians were agreed and could dwell together in unbroken concord. They could then employ the time and energy they now

bestow on each other in united and uninterrupted endeavors to carry the gospel to every creature, and in mutual edification. But this is the same thing as to say that it would be desirable to have them understand "all mysteries and all knowledge." The chief reason why Christians differ and are split up into many sects is, that they, in common with all other mortals, are yet incapable of apprehending the truth and apprehending it completely. It is evident, if every Christian saw the truth just as it is, and the whole of the truth, he would see the same thing as every other Christian, and all would see alike. But there never has been one since Jesus, probably, of whom this was true; while as to the majority, we know that they are sadly wanting in intellectual and moral comprehension. The inevitable result is, a wide variety of views about doctrine, about the nature and authority of Jesus, about polities, and governments, and forms. These various views can, fortunately, be classified to a considerable extent; otherwise we should have as many sects as there are persons. As it is, we have only so many as represent the principal divergences of opinion.

It is to be recognized that there are some very important benefits flowing from this apparent misfortune. Just why our Creator saw fit to start us here in a condition of relative ignorance and imperfection, we may not be able to guess. But we get some hint of the reason in the great pleasure we

have in the development of our powers and in the acquisition of knowledge. There is an indescribable delight in the process of unfolding the faculties of our nature and in the pursuit of information. So great is the satisfaction of mental growth, that an enthusiastic German thinker declared, that if the Genius of fate should present herself before him, holding in one hand the truth itself and in the other the commission to search for truth, he would deliberately choose the latter. I do not quite run to this length of ecstasy over the mere privilege of pursuing the Divine object of our existence; for I am of opinion that the pleasure of the pursuit depends on our success in grasping ever more and more of the good pursued. But I am filled with wonder and gratitude when I perceive how an apparent evil becomes the occasion of so much and so exalted pleasure. And high as is the satisfaction of intellectual development, it is far outreached by the inexpressible joy of growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. While I would not lay too much stress on the amount of that growth which is directly fostered by sectarian divisions and the multiform labors that ensue from them, I think it is but fair to allow that vastly more truth is seen while so many sharp eyes are looking from all the angles of the horizon than would be discovered if all stood on the same side and were intent on verifying the same prepossessions. The sects may be severally narrow, preju-

diced, partisan; but coming up from so many sides, exploring so many avenues, watched and criticised and compelled to show proofs, by all the others, they cannot help contributing to a broad general diffusion of light, nor prevent the actual truth from being soon discovered.

At any rate, since human imperfection is a fact, and it is inevitable in consequence that we entertain partial views of the truth before we are capable of seeing it in full splendor, there can be no question of the advantage of diversities of gifts and differences of administrations. It has often been observed that uniformity generally means deadness. It is nearly fatal to mental progress to have all classes either indifferent or perfectly agreed on questions of politics, society, science, and religion. And the reason is, not that it is depressing or stagnating to have uniformity in goodness or in correct opinions, but that, since in the nature of the case the goodness and the correct opinions cannot be characteristic of all, and very likely are not of any one, the harmony is the result of ignorance rather than of knowledge, and of indifference or insincerity rather than of free and hearty enjoyment of conscious rectitude. If our people were of that cast of mind they were comparatively careless what ideas they accepted or what policies they followed, as the Celestials to a great degree are, we should have, like them, a dismal, unenlivening monotony of civilization, —

a long historic road without a turn. Or if we had here an omnipotent State Church, such as they have in Russia, compelling all ranks to enter one church door, and if they cannot heartily approve at least refrain from opposing the doctrines and forms of the established religion, we should have, as they have, very little intellectual activity and no religious progress. It is obviously better to allow the honest and inevitable differences of opinion to group themselves as they will, so that there shall be hearty sincerity in each division; so that the mental and religious aptitudes of every class shall be met; so that every man and woman shall have a congenial place to stand and work; so that no part of the moral capacity or energy of society shall be lost; so that by a various and stimulating rivalry, and by reciprocal criticism and comparison, all may be warmed up to the requisite activity and have the largest inducements to both enterprise and good behavior.

I think, also, we learn in the strife between our many sects a useful lesson in mutual toleration. Time was when here in New England any sect other than the ruling or Orthodox had a sorry chance for its life. All the facts of the history are conclusive to the point, that it would have continued to be so down to this hour if the multiplication of sects and their growth in the community, and the protection for fair competition granted them by the civil power, had not taught the Orthodox churches that in order

to enjoy rights for themselves they must concede rights to the other sects. This was a hard but salutary lesson; and now that it has been well learned who wishes to have it unlearned? Yet I would hardly dare to leave even the liberty-loving Liberals to maintain a fair standard of toleration on the subject of religion without the spur of the continual reminder that this is a reciprocal matter, and just what you desire for yourself is just what you must grant to others.

But there are evils as well as benefits inseparable from the existence of many sects. To begin with a very noticeable one, just see how expensive a luxury sectarianism is. They are multiplying little chapels and meeting-places in this quarter of the city,[1] and maintaining them in a half-famished condition by great exertions, when the three principal churches already established here are large enough to take them all in and provide for them much more comfortably than they can provide for themselves. Here are our Episcopal brethren, heroically carrying on a hopeful movement, and by means of assistance from wealthier churches holding its course firmly and usefully in this community. But how much more economical for them to come in here where

[1] Cambridge in 1878. This passage contains the only strictly local allusion in these lectures. But as it serves the purpose of illustration better than any fictitious case, I retain it in its original form.

there is room and a welcome for them, and where it seems to us that they would do as much good and get more? The same general state of facts may be noted everywhere. Communities that could maintain two churches handsomely are "supporting" six shabbily. Then each denomination must have its separate schools and colleges, its literature, its machinery of operation. It is clear enough that it would be a great saving of money and a great gain in efficiency if there could be a consolidation of forces.

Candor, however, requires the admission that this presentation by no means exhausts the whole case. At first blush it seems as if the money adventured in these chapels, schools, and publication interests were so much that would otherwise flow into the treasuries of the older and better established. It seems as if, for example, we should be the gainers by having the Episcopalians disband. But in point of fact it is not so. If St. James Church should close its doors, sell its property, and all its attendants come straight over here bringing the proceeds of the sale to add to our funds, that would be a help to us certainly. But let us suppose that society had not been organized and that church never been built, — which is the true way to look at the matter: would those people have been here, and would the money that went into their house have gone into ours? We all know they would not. That money was drawn out

by the appeal that particular movement made. You and I could not have got a dollar of it. Those people are collected there for a similar reason. It probably would not have made the difference of a dollar or of an attendant to us if that pleasant little church had never been erected. So that in reality the Episcopal enterprise in this part of the city is to be reckoned, not as so much abstracted from the others, but as a clear addition of so much to the moral and religious forces of this community. The same argument is applicable to the schools and publishing houses of each sect. They are the products of a liberality and a zeal to which only that particular denomination makes appeal; and they are not to be reckoned therefore as taken from, but as added to, what the others have produced.

Another evil of many sects, is the partisanship and bad feeling that are engendered by the disputes and strifes between them. I have for many years had opportunity nearly every week to examine representative journals of the principal sects, and indeed of most of the minor ones, in this country. I can testify that they are generally more courteous, candid, and open to conviction than party political papers are, especially during a campaign. But they are far enough still from being what they ought, either in respect of courtesy or fairness. There is the unpleasant bias of sect in all of them. It is hard for them to state the truth in a case of controversy,

or to admit the facts when they tell against their side. Too much of their space as well as of their learning, eloquence, and wit are wasted on their theological or ecclesiastical opponents. It is not to be denied and cannot be concealed that the sectarian warfare carried on between the different churches of the country is belittling, and of bad influence on those outside.

But here again, we must distinguish between the real cause and the apparent cause. It is not because there are so many sects that there is so much unseemly strife, but because there is so little genuine Christianity in them. Undoubtedly there are now more sects than there is any legitimate warrant for; and the excess is an evil and a direct source of unnecessary irritation. But most of them are justified as we have seen by the honest and inevitable differences of view which a developing, short-sighted humanity will be sure to have. They are not an evil, but a benefit and a necessity to man in his evolution towards full knowledge and perfect vision. The evil arises, where almost all evil does, in the abuse which hot-headed and not too pure-hearted men make of their privilege. They bite and devour each other because the madness is on them. And men did just so, and with far more terrible effect, when uniformity was the rule; when there was but one church, and when the much-berated evil of sectarianism was almost unknown. I think on the

whole I am safer from my Catholic or Orthodox brother's holy rage on this side the paling than I should be on that. He might roast me, or pull out my tongue, or break me on the wheel, or at any rate immure me in a dungeon, as his predecessors were wont to do with those who worshipped God in a way they called heresy. I much prefer his harmless literary whip to the cat-o-nine-tails his ancestors used to lay on the backs of such as I.

In fact, when we come to look at it carefully and fairly, we see that the evils usually attributed to the existence of many sects are often no evils at all, and in other cases are properly referable to the old and bitter root of all our mischiefs, — human ignorance and depravity. If all the churches recognized the apostolic rule, — differences of administrations indeed, but the same Lord, and diversities of gifts but the same spirit, — all legitimate sectarian divisions would be found to be helpful, as affording suitable platforms on which the various parties could stand in carrying on their respective parts of a common work, and appropriate centres of new moral influence. In the present state of human knowledge, as always hitherto, it is to be expected that men equally able, equally learned, and equally sincere will take widely different views of the same subject. They will often stand arrayed on opposite sides of the same question. Nor, as I view it, is this to be regretted. But it is much to be lamented that when

these men are disciples of the same Master, and thereby equally committed to the duty of speaking the truth in love, they cannot differ in amity, and discuss their differences and compare arguments in a fraternal spirit. It is even more painful to see that they are willing to convert themselves into petty popes and mutually disfellowship each other. One would suppose they would be too painfully aware of their lack of full knowledge to permit them to act as if they were omniscient.

I am looking forward to the time when there shall be one view of God, of Christ, of man, of duty, and of destiny; when there shall be one spirit and one thought in all hearts, and so one flock and one shepherd. But I see it far, far down the stream of the ages. To-day we are not equal to seeing eye to eye. We are, I devoutly and thankfully believe, on the way to that blessed consummation; and I am chiefly concerned with holding myself and aiding to hold others in such a fair and fraternal mood, that while we diligently pursue our several ways we do no violence to that spirit through whose gracious entreaty we all at length shall be brought into unity of faith.

II.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

"*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" — MATT. xvi. 18.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

IT makes a surprising difference what our point of view is. Looking at affairs in South Carolina with Massachusetts eyes, they wear a very different aspect from what they do as seen by South Carolina eyes. Again, it is possible to contemplate the same object under such altered relations and in so changed a light as to give it all the characteristics of another object. A friend of mine tells the story, that at a religious conference which he once attended were two clergymen who held a reciprocally unfavorable opinion of each other. It chanced that both of them, together with my friend, were entertained at the same house. At table they managed to deepen on each other the already strong impression of demerit; so that before the meeting opened, each had sought occasion to say to my friend how much he was repelled by the other. One set the other down as a pompous, presuming fellow, of no great weight or sincerity. The other declared him in turn a wordy, vapid declaimer. But during the day it fell to both

of them to address the meeting, and each acquitted himself with so much modesty, delicacy, and ability, that ere they retired that night both sought out my friend and made haste to recall the unfavorable opinion they had passed on each other in the morning.

So to Protestants the Roman Catholic religion and rites wear a different face from that they present to their own devotees; and they appear in more repellent or engaging form accordingly as they are seen at their worst or at their best. In the cities and towns of the Northern States the Catholic population is distinctly marked from all others. It is foreign in the first place. That creates a line of separation and tends to excite a measure of aversion. For your native American looks with suspicion or with condescension on all who were so unfortunate to be born in a less favored land. Then it is a poor population for the most part; and I believe poverty has never had the effect to commend any class to the esteem of their fellow-creatures. Finally it is uncultivated and generally very ignorant. Of course it has the characteristics of a poor, rude, and uneducated class in all places. It is coarse, uncleanly, clannish, apt to be intemperate, and supplies us with by far the larger part of our vicious and criminal classes. The sober, cleanly, mannerly, and intelligent native-born citizen enters a Roman Catholic church here in New England, or almost anywhere

at the North, and he is struck unpleasantly with the contrast between the glitter and pomp of the altar, the priestly vestments and the ceremonial, and the poverty and rudeness of the worshippers. He observes that the edifice is capacious, imposing, costly; that expense has been lavishly laid out on the chancel and its furniture; that money has been obtained from some source to pay for much costly ornament. He knows that not only the people who worship there but their brethren throughout the region are uniformly poor, and he feels the disparity between their condition and the extravagant demands which a sacerdotal theory of religion makes on their humble resources. He says, "This cannot be acceptable to God. If he be that just and benevolent Being I have been taught to regard him, he would be much better pleased to see these people orderly, educated, thrifty, living in comfortable homes and capable of taking an intelligent interest in all the matters that concern a free citizen, though worshipping in the plainest and most unpretentious temples, than have them indulge in all this ecclesiastical display and ritualistic pomp, maintained in no small degree at the expense of their continued poverty and ignorance. Roman Catholicism," he adds, as he turns away from the contemplation of such a spectacle, "is a system of antiquated ideas and useless forms, begotten of Mediæval civilization and the barbaric love of pageants, and well calculated to retain a rude

and credulous people in their rudeness and credulity. I wish the world were rid of it; and I especially lament its presence and influence in Republican America."

But if he should go to reside in a Southern city, in Baltimore or Washington, and should enter one of the Catholic churches there and behold in every attitude of devotion the men whom he had met in the Exchange, at the Bar, in high official station, and in the most refined social circles; if he should watch his opportunity now to test these people, thus unexpectedly revealed to him as idolaters and almost pagan, by observing how much they know of men, of books, of business, and how faithfully they discharge their duties in all the relations of life; or if he were to pass some years abroad, mingling with the best society of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Austria, and should learn that a large share of the most cultivated and accomplished people in Europe are Roman Catholics; that learned *savans*, like St. George Mivart and Geoffry St. Hilaire, and noble poets, and elegant scholars, and brilliant men of letters, are in this communion, while for monuments of architecture and memorials of splendid art and trophies of the masters of mankind he must resort largely to the churches, schools, libraries, and museums of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, — he would be pretty sure to revise his hastily formed New England judgment. And if he were of that impressible cast of mind of

not a few New England travellers I have known, apt to be affected by the appeal which venerable power and illustrious lineage makes to an imaginative temperament, he might even return to his republican home disenchanted of his early affection for the plain Puritan ritual and the homely bare-walled meeting-house, and more than half-minded to have a cathedral and a college of Jesuits right here in sound of the sea that washed Plymouth Rock, and in sight of the protesting peak of Bunker Hill Monument. So wide a difference does it make from what point and in what company we approach a shrine.

Not, however, to place our subject in any false light, either of ugliness or grace, let us look at it in clear outline, thus: The Roman Catholic Church is the only organization west of the Adriatic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains that has continuously held sway, either as a political or as an ecclesiastical power, from the institution of the original Christian Church in the city of Rome, in the first century, down to the present time. It was not, however, distinctly in possession of any function as a church or sect until some time in the third century, when the gradual growth of his influence as the representative of Christianity in the chief city of the world gave the bishop of Rome the leadership, or primacy, among his brethren in the Church. From the acquisition of this recognized supremacy on the part of the bishop

of Rome, the origin of the Roman Catholic Church really dates. It was afterwards claimed, in the controversy which arose about the Roman bishop's right to this primacy, that Christ, in the words of my text, founded his church on the Apostle Peter; that Peter, receiving his pastoral commission from Jesus, went to Rome and founded the Christian Church there; and that he and his successors in the original pastorate of the first church in Rome constitute an unbroken line of church officials from Christ down, all based on the original rock, and having in virtue of that exclusive distinction a rightful supremacy over all other churches. This claim was ridiculed in the Church at the time, and although persistently adhered to by the bishop of Rome and his partisans, and finally made the fundamental canon in the Catholic Church, has never been substantiated by any testimony that carried conviction, or hardly commanded respect, with unprejudiced historians. The bishop of Rome, under the style and title of Pope or Pontiff, exercised more or less complete sway over all the Western branches of the Church down to the Protestant Reformation in Germany and England. So much is to be recognized as a fact. Of his right to do any such thing there exists no evidence in any form, worthy the respectful consideration of an enlightened scholar. During this long period the Roman Church has, as a matter of course, been involved in nearly all the controversies, strifes,

excesses, absurdities, corruptions, and atrocities that have more or less disfigured the history of the nations over which it has asserted authority. Not content with wielding spiritual supremacy, the Pontiff, in the persons of some of the more able and ambitious bishops, — such as Hildebrand, or Gregory VII., and Paschal II., — asserted also his temporal authority, and endeavored to exercise dominion over emperors and kings. The ability and success with which this preposterous claim was urged, no doubt added greatly to the influence and power of the Church for many centuries, and contributed to lengthen and strengthen its existence. In half the places of authority in the principal courts of Europe, ecclesiastics were to be found who served the Papacy with even more astuteness and fidelity than they attempted to serve the State. But a penalty the Church paid for its rash adventure into the stormy field of secular administration was the odium she incurred in the numerous bitter contests, cruel wars, and fierce retaliations between different peoples and classes, in which her share was uniformly that of chief prosecutor. It ought in fairness to be remembered, however, that she suffers this odium for the reason, among others, that she lived through all that period, and is living still. We do not twit the dead of their share in crimes.

At the present date the Roman Catholic Church claims a membership of about one half of the Chris-

tian population of the world, — or over two hundred millions. The allegiance of considerable numbers of these — sometimes including whole States — to the Roman Pontiff is of a very uncertain kind. But the organization is still as nearly a unit as any of like vast extent could well be, and embraces, besides the Pope, about sixty cardinals of all grades, two hundred archbishops, eight hundred bishops, and eighty vicars apostolic. These constitute the hierarchy. The untitled clergy number about eighty thousand.

The distribution of this church's membership and authority bears out well its title to the adjective "Catholic," or universal. It is all-powerful in Italy and the Papal States, in Spain, in France, in Ireland, and in Austria; is a leading denomination in Germany, Great Britain, Portugal, Belgium, and Holland; has a large following in Russia and in Turkey in Europe; has eighteen archbishoprics and thirty-eight bishoprics in Turkey in Asia; is no inconsiderable power in Persia, India, China, and the Spanish Possessions; has established itself with more or less of permanence in Australasia and Polynesia, and along the coast of Africa; has fifty bishoprics in the United States, sixteen in Canada, eleven in Mexico, five in Central America, eleven in Brazil, six in Venezuela, and twenty-eight in the remainder of South America and the adjacent islands. If its pretensions are great, its performances are certainly commensurate with them. By means of its disciplined hierarchy

and priesthood, its numerous orders and its efficient organization, it is able to wield all its vast and heterogeneous forces with more unanimity and precision of purpose than any other institution of equal extent that ever existed in our world. At the same time its missionary zeal carries forward proselyting enterprises in all quarters of the globe; and there is no wilderness so remote, no island so inaccessible, no tribe of human beings so savage or so barbarous, as not to be visited by a Catholic missionary.

It is commonly supposed that the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are as different from those of Protestants as its polity and forms are. But in fact they are quite similar to what is generally known as Orthodoxy. The fundamental tenet is belief in the Holy Catholic Church and in the bishop of Rome as the vicar or substitute of Jesus Christ on earth. The doctrine of the Trinity — one God in three persons — is stated by that church in almost identical terms with the formula adopted by Protestant Trinitarian churches. It holds that the sin of Adam forfeited for the human family their original state of holiness and perfection and their inheritance of eternal blessedness. This lapse rendered necessary the great scheme of redemption, by which the Divine nature became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, who died as God-man to expiate the sin of our first parents and merit for us sufficient grace to

procure our salvation. Although the atonement thus made is sufficient for the salvation of all, all are not saved; nor indeed any except those to whom Christ's merit is applied in the ways appointed; namely, by the authority and ordinances of the Church. Baptism saves infants; and that together with the other sacraments saves adults, provided they receive them with a suitable disposition. The doctrine of election to eternal glory is formally professed by the Church, but is quite nullified by other doctrines. Everlasting happiness is immediately attained by baptized infants, by martyrs, by adults dying immediately after baptism, and by all other baptized persons who die with perfect love of God and free from sin or guilt. Impenitent sinners, if unbaptized, are forever separated from God and suffer torments. Those who die guilty of trivial offences are separated from God for a period. Bishops and priests, as delegates of Christ, may forgive sins; and what they do on earth is ratified in heaven.

A modified worship is paid to the Virgin Mary, as the "mother of God," and greater or less reverence is given to eminent saints, as a recognition of their triumphant virtue. The Church is final authority in all things, as the appointed instrument of Almighty God for the guidance and salvation of the world. Therefore there is no disputing its decree, which when pronounced by the bishops, with their head the Pope, is infallible. The Scriptures are profit-

able, but only when studied under the direction of a divinely authorized interpreter.

It will be seen from this summary of doctrines — which, of course, omits many curious particulars — that the Roman Catholic Church is Orthodoxy *plus* sacerdotalism; or, to put it the other way, Orthodoxy is Roman Catholicism *minus* sacerdotalism. In the Catholic view, the Orthodox scheme of doctrines is very important; but chiefly so because these doctrines can be so applied through an infallible Church as to become the sure means of man's salvation. If the infallible Church were eliminated from the scheme, it would be as powerless as the electric fluid without a battery. The Bible, the creed, the act of worship, and even the most upright and godly life, are nothing in the account without the aid and sanction of that Divine instrument of grace and redemption, appointed of God to rectify all human aberrations and give efficacy to all human endeavors, — the infallible Church.

It requires but slight acquaintance with the infirmities of man's nature to perceive how an institution making such extraordinary assumptions of authority to regulate the judgment, rule the conscience, and decide for time and for eternity the fate of men, and which, notwithstanding the high-sounding names of pontiff and primate and cardinal and bishop, has always and notoriously been administered by men of like passions, prejudices,

and infirmities of intellect with their fellows, and not seldom by men of exceptional weakness and impiety, should inevitably run into all sorts of extravagance, folly, and unreasonableness. Nothing but a perpetual miracle of Divine intervention could save it from such excesses. It must also have become deeply encrusted with chronic abuses. And the history of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as its present policies, doctrines, and ceremonies, affords abundant and melancholy evidence that what might have been expected has actually taken place. It presents the extraordinary spectacle, among the institutions of the present age, of a great and powerful organization, numbering hosts of able and highly accomplished men in its ranks, that does not scruple, in the face of all the intelligence within and without it, to pretend to abilities and functions that it does not possess, never did possess, and which in the nature of the case no church on earth can ever have. It is — as a church — everywhere, except among pagans and barbarians, the antagonist of civilization, the foe of popular education and popular government, and the foster-mother of credulity, superstition, and religious error.

I do not allege that it is purposely such. I readily accord to its prelates and priests a fair human average of sincerity and high aims. I believe they are uniformly well-wishers of their kind, and are honestly laboring

to promote what they believe to be the glory of God and the welfare of mankind. Furthermore, I am not blind to the peculiar merits and graces which the sacerdotal system, with its ambition to keep a long line of illustrious confessors and saints, has developed. I know of no sweeter piety, nor simpler and stronger faith, nor purer living, than I can find eminent examples of in the Roman Catholic Church. It has an imposing calendar of spurious saints, as it has vast museums of spurious relics; but its list of gentle and genuine saints, who have borne their Master's cross in their Master's spirit, is long enough and rich enough to endow any church on earth. But the grave and incurable defect of this great and venerable hierarchy, — a defect becoming more apparent and more mischievous every year, — is its monstrous assumptions of knowledge and authority. These are at war with reason, with the teaching of history, with the convictions of enlightened men, and with the true progress and welfare of human society. In just so far as she is faithful to her assumptions, the Roman Catholic Church is the foe equally of the gospel of Jesus and of the peace of the world. She succeeds in becoming useful and helpful to great numbers of men, and in contributing to advance the real Kingdom of Heaven on earth, only by practically discarding her theories and taking counsel of her Christian instincts rather than of her papal pretensions.

Many people fear her dominion, especially in this republican country. I own that I am somewhat jealous of her encroachments; but the temporal power of the Roman Catholic Church is now hopelessly broken. She will never again have controlling influence in the counsels of any European government. It seems incredible that she should acquire it here. We have to fear the effect of her unity and her quiet, persistent, never-remitted efforts to gain the objects of her desire, in those communities where her population is large. But even there, I am accustomed to think, we shall best guard against any usurpations or abuses she might be guilty of, by a course of candor, thorough impartiality, persistent use of our ample means of enlightenment, and by the steady exhibition of a perfectly Christian temper.

A chief reason why the world has so often failed to discriminate between religious disputants, and has as frequently given the victory to the wrong party as to the right, is because it has not been able to distinguish any difference in the spirit by which the parties have been animated. Both have been equally rancorous and unreasonable. In such a situation the merits of the controversy drop out of sight. It is to the actors a struggle for victory: to spectators a strife of tongues. If the attempt to check the aggressiveness of the Roman Catholic Church in this country loses the character of a

calm and candid adherence to great principles, and takes on the character of a heated sectarian war, the cause of freedom and reason will surely suffer. The weapons of its warfare are not carnal but spiritual.

III.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." — 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

THE words taken for a text to this discourse are a favorite quotation and motto with Episcopal divines, as the words chosen for the last lecture are a favorite proof-text with Roman Catholic writers. In these lectures, however, I do not enter into any argument either against others or in my own behalf; the bearing of the text on what follows is not meant, therefore, to be logical. It is merely a way-mark, showing in what company we pass the particular evening.

When we think of the Episcopal Church, our minds by a law of association reach a little farther, and bring into the view the Roman Catholic Church. There is such a family likeness between them that the face of the one recalls the other. Externally contemplated there are points of resemblance. The architecture of Episcopal churches conforms closely, both on the outside and on the inside, to that of the Catholic. It is uniformly Gothic, with the symbolic window behind the altar, and the "Catharine wheel"

or Rose window at the opposite end. There are the recessed chancel, the altar-rail, the communion-table within it, the pulpit on the left, the lecturn or reading-desk on the right, the robed minister, and the liturgical service, which are the common traits of both. Looking beneath externals, we discover that they are organized on a similar plan. The method of inducting individual members into the church is much the same in both. The ceremony of ordaining a minister or of consecrating a bishop is quite similar, even to the pronouncing by the officiating bishop of the genuinely papal blessing: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." It was remarked in the lecture on the Roman Catholic Church, that its doctrinal system is nearly identical with that generally known as Orthodoxy. The same remark applies to the Episcopal Church, both here and in England. We saw, however, that the doctrines of the former church are greatly modified and sometimes wholly nullified by the theory of priestly and church authority. Here again we trace a resemblance between the Episcopal and Catholic churches. In spite of the letter of the creed and the explanations of church commentators, it remains a fact, patent to all outside observers, that in the Episcopal Church regular baptism, proper

episcopal confirmation, observance of the sacrament, and loyalty to the church are of so much more importance than all other things, that belief in all its doctrines counts for little without this loyalty; while doubt is rarely or never thrown on the acceptance with God of any regularly inducted member of the church who remained faithful to its observances, though known to be blameworthy in life and a denier of the creed. That is to say, the Catholic habit of exalting sacerdotal and ecclesiastical authority, and in the last result making everything hinge on church connection and fidelity, seems to have descended as a lineal inheritance to the Episcopal body. The Episcopal Church does not arrogate to itself such extraordinary powers and functions, and does not lay so much stress on the saving and sanctifying virtue of connection with itself; but it makes these things paramount, nevertheless.

The resemblances noted lead directly to the inquiry, "Whence arose the Episcopal Church?" So far as this country is concerned, the inquiry is soon answered. We know that the "Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States" grew up from the English churches formed here in many of the early settlements, and provided with a bishop in 1783. But what was the origin of the English Church, of which the American is a planting? This is by no means a new inquiry. The Catholic Church on one side and the Dissenting churches on the other have let the

light in pretty freely on all the facts connected with the rise of the English Church. Besides, there are two parties in that church itself, as there are two in its representative here; one of which claims that every link in the chain of succession has been verified from Saint Peter down to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The other party admits that the chain is broken in many places, and that some links are missing; and it regards the matter as of no great importance any way. It is agreed on all hands, however, that as a distinct and independent establishment the English Church has no history that runs back of the last years of Henry VIII.'s reign, or about 1533. The attempt to trace a line of English bishops through all the long period when England was under the sole and undisputed sway of Rome, has been about as futile as any ever undertaken; and only the most inveterate sticklers for the English succession now pretend to anything of the kind. And even they content themselves with the assertion of it without venturing any proof whatever. The Roman Catholic pretence on this subject is amazing; the English is ridiculous. The patent facts in the case are, that, after many symptoms of a disposition to break with Rome, the English people and Church, under the lead of that not very pious but very independent and able monarch, Henry VIII., threw off the yoke. The occasion of doing this was the King's wayward passion in putting away Catherine of Arragon and taking for wife Anne Boleyn.

For this the Pope threatened excommunication, and finally carried out his threat. But it is apparent that the people of England by quite a majority were ready, on this pretext or any other, to cut loose from a domination that had steadily grown more exacting and intolerable. Henry lost no time in making such changes as would accustom the churches and people to a new order of things. It is significant how readily the parliament seconded his wishes and threw the authority of statute around his proceedings. He was proclaimed the supreme head of the English Church under Christ. Payments to Rome were prohibited, bulls and dispensations abolished, monasteries subjected to royal and government visitation and exempted from all other; and the rights heretofore assumed and exercised by the Pope and his legates were vested in the King.

Here actually begins the English Church. It was now no longer subject to Rome; but for some years no change was made in its doctrines or ritual, and at first it was not intended to make any change at all. But when it became necessary to alter the formularies so as to exclude the recognition of Roman authority, it was observed that there were other things in the ritual and confessions that savored of papal extravagance. In the mean time the English statesmen and prelates, put upon the defensive by their action in cutting loose from Rome, began to criticise not only papal author-

ity and usages, but the articles of faith. The inevitable result was a gradual divergence from the doctrine and ritual which had hitherto and for a long period been followed. How far these divergences would have reached if they had not been arrested by the revision and adoption of an elaborate creed, the Thirty-nine Articles, and a book of forms and prayers, which fixed the faith and order of the English Church in a mould of unchangeable law, we can only guess. But our conjecture may be greatly aided by recollecting how far those branches of the Church that had no such mould of law have gone, in the direction of independence and progress.

In this brief recital of the facts of the historical origin of the English and Episcopal Church, we learn why it is that the resemblance between it and the Roman Catholic Church is so strong. It grew out of the Roman Church, and its tendency away from its parent was arrested before it had taken on many independent peculiarities.

I shall not speak particularly of the doctrines of this church, as they are not essentially different from those of other "Evangelical" churches, further than to remark, that, so far as my observation goes, no sect seems to prize so much the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Deity of Jesus. Episcopalians have often said to me, in substance, "We could easily get along with all your other heresies if you were not Unitarian." I account for the pre-eminence

given in this church to the doctrine of the Trinity, by the fact that more than any other Protestant church it leans on a certain imagined efficacy in the Lord's Supper, or, as it is called in that church, the "Sacrament of the Holy Communion." The efficacy arises in some mysterious way out of the circumstance that the emblems are a sort of typical sacrifice, not of a man but of God. If the Deity of Jesus were given up, and he were regarded as a created and subordinate being, the sacrifice would seem to lose its sin and guilt cleansing character; regarded merely as a memorial and a means of spiritual exaltation, it would appear to Episcopalians a barren and profitless thing. Hence the tenacity with which they cling to the doctrine that enables them to attribute a mystic efficacy to the Communion.

The Episcopal Church takes its name from the Greek word for bishop, ἐπίσκοπος, and is so distinguished because the final authority resides with the bishops. The priests and deacons, who with the bishops make up the three orders of the church, are subject to the authority of the bishops. In this respect it follows the pattern of the Roman and the Greek churches, which are also episcopal; though they carry the episcopate higher, having archbishops, patriarchs, cardinals, and in the Roman Church a pope. It is contended by Episcopalians that this three-fold order — bishops, priests, and deacons — was instituted by Christ and his apostles, and that

as the Roman Church has added to it by the unwarrantable assumptions of the papacy, so the Puritan and Liberal and Independent sects have taken from it by discarding the episcopate, and by giving the laity an authority in church government and legislation which it was never meant they should have. I have gone over the argument and proofs of the Episcopalians on this point many times and carefully. I am fully impressed with their force in many particulars, but on the whole I fail to be either convinced or moved by them. Briefly stated, the theory and proofs run thus: Christ, whom all Christians recognize to be authority, "ordained" twelve apostles, and these apostles in due time ordained seven deacons. Now Christ, the head of the Church, is represented by the bishop, the apostles are represented by the priests, and the order of deacons fills the same place as that originally assigned to this class of officials. Here are the three orders in the primitive church, and here they still are in the Episcopal Church. This is very compact, and at first sight might seem very conclusive. But the difficulty with it is, that no person would ever draw the idea of these orders from the accounts of the matter in the New Testament. It is only after an Episcopal commentator has put his meaning into it that any one is able to see the outline of the three orders; and even then it is faint. Besides, there are no traces, or very dim and as it seems to me quite fanciful traces,

of any relation between these drawing them into organic unity. Christ does not at all suggest to us, as we get our conception of him from the record, a modern bishop; neither does a modern bishop very strongly recall Christ. The priestly functions which the apostles exercised were few, and wholly wanting in order, regularity, or apparent recognition of other dignitaries in the Church. In fact, if anything lies open on the pages of the New Testament, it is that in the time of Christ there was no organization worthy the name, nor one of which, in the case of civil or political society, any jurist or statesman would pretend to find the record and constitution. If anything is clear, it is, further, that in the time of the apostles an organization began to grow up, at first almost without form or coherency of parts, or any prescribed rule of procedure; but which at length, under the exigencies of a growing company of believers in a common precious faith, assumed more definite purpose, distincter outline, and compacter form. But it requires either a strong prepossession or a very active imagination to discover at any period during the ministry of the apostles such a distinctly marked and completely organized institution as we now instantly recall when the word "church" is mentioned. They had in those days a sort of territorial church government, which pointed to something more complex and complete when by and by the growth of Christian population should

demand it. Such a government finally arose; and even one more complex and ceremonious than the simple genius of the religion of Jesus called for. But it seems to me a species of fanatical credulity on the part of any one, and a painful species on the part of sober, educated, and critical men, to persist in believing that they find a full-fledged episcopate in the very loose and shadowy outlines of a rude missionary machinery, extemporized piece by piece, as the need of it was felt, by Jesus and his apostles.

A similar remark applies with respect to the claim of this church that there was in the apostolic days a liturgy. The most that can be allowed on this point is, that there were numerous forms of prayer used, and perhaps used customarily, by different persons and in different synagogues and churches. But a liturgy implies, not that I have one form and you another, and the third man still another; or that this church has one and the other churches in the city have each a different one, and so for the churches and people generally, — but that there is one stereotyped formula for all Christian people and churches. To amount to anything in the argument, something of the latter kind should be shown. But this cannot be, as is well known. A recent Episcopal writer, speaking of this subject, remarks: "So numerous were the early formularies of worship, that they can be distributed into groups and families, genera and

species, very much as naturalists classify animals and plants." [1]

Still, let us not miss the exact range and bearing of these conclusions. An episcopate may be the best form of church polity, although its roots cannot be found in the soil of the apostolic age; and a liturgy may be the most suitable and helpful form of worship, although there was nothing properly answering to it in those days. The true philosophy on these subjects appears to me to be, that the form of government and ritual are matters to be determined — like the style and constitution of civil society — by the demands of enlightened reason when applied to the circumstances. Christendom has had a good deal of experience under a wide variety of conditions. It may be that a fair result of this experience is, that the episcopal theory is the best. I would not like to have the responsibility of saying, for all Christians, yea or nay, on this proposition. For myself, while I see many advantages in it, I am thankful for the liberty I have in this land to choose a different and, as it seems to me, more appropriate and beneficial form. I think the tendency of an episcopate is to aggrandize power, extend its pretensions, invest itself with new prerogatives, and at the last to bury the simplicity of the gospel under a mountain

[1] Since this Lecture was written, the late Dean Stanley's "Christian Institutions" has appeared, in which the author takes the same position, supporting his view by numerous and incontestable proofs.

of sacerdotal assumptions and ceremonial displays. The worst effects of this tendency may be observed in the Roman Catholic Church, which as to its pretensions and its pomps, so distant from both the letter and the spirit of the primitive gospel, is but a grand illustration of the excesses into which priestly domination is liable to run. And in the Anglican and the American Episcopal churches we may see the natural fruit of the same ecclesiastical tree. The high-church and the ritualistic parties, comprising a large and powerful element in both these bodies, are scarcely excelled by Rome itself in the extravagance of their claims and the superciliousness of their manners. Moderate and broad churchmen assure us that this is only a temporary flux in the great episcopal tide, which will be surely corrected as it flows on. But just how it is to be corrected when these parties are making headway every year, and are now nearly dominant in both countries, I suspect it puzzles and troubles themselves to make out. A moderate episcopacy, with wise and large-minded men of free proclivities in the bishop's office, would appear to me to be a not particularly objectionable thing. I should, at least, have as much hope of its doing thoroughly and progressively the great work the Lord has left his Church to do, as any style of administration that has yet been tried. But such an episcopacy has never been known; and if we had one instituted to-morrow, it would not be likely to

outlast the generation which saw it established. The tendency of the priestly office and functions is uniformly to the abuse of prerogative; and it must remain so until every man of whom any one would be likely to make a bishop has become a statesman, saint, and scholar, — three natures in one person.

The Episcopal Church has often been derided by the Puritan and Methodist churches, as a cold and formal lip-servant. I trust we are capable of a juster judgment. We have learned that we cannot estimate any man's Christian faith or worth, either by the frequency with which he reads a prayer or the volubility and unction with which he extemporizes it. We have learned to look deeper; and we know them all, from the Catholic to the Quaker, by their fruits. Thus judged, I think the Episcopal Church, taken altogether and in every place, has no reason to be ashamed of its history. By means of the unity and coherency of its organization it has been able to treasure up all the results of its learning, piety, and benevolence; and I think the contribution it makes to the good name and true fame of our common religion is worthy its venerable origin and illustrious history. The scholar, who has been accustomed to go to it for examples of high character, refined accomplishments, and the most generous culture will hardly fail to hold it in a kind of tender respect, although he may be quite aware of its lapses and dangers, and may much prefer a simpler and freer polity for him-

self. In recent years the Episcopal Church in the United States has shown an unwonted vigor in pushing its lines east, west, north, and south. I look on while it works so systematically and effectively, and my feeling is, Would that every branch of the Protestant Church in America, and especially my own, might learn to carry forward its work with like method, decorum, and efficiency!

IV.

THE CONGREGATIONAL BODY.

" Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." — Acts v. 29.

THE CONGREGATIONAL BODY.

WE saw, in our examination of the facts connected with the origin of the Episcopal Church, that it took its rise from the feeling of discontent which had gradually grown up in England with the domination of the Pope, and which culminated in the outbreak under Henry VIII., who set up for himself, not only as sovereign of England, but as the head of the English Church. It is every way fitting that we should consider next the history of that branch of the Church which next sprang up.

The feeling of discontent that threw off the yoke of Rome was not wholly appeased by what was substituted for it in England. The English Church for a long period, and to no inconsiderable extent up to the present time, continued in the use of most of the forms that had distinguished the Roman ritual. This was disagreeable to a considerable party, who finally — in the reign of Elizabeth, a daughter of Henry — refused to conform to many of the practices, — such as making the sign of the cross, kneeling to

receive the communion, wearing the surplice, and the like, — and came to be known and styled "Nonconformists." They still recognized the authority and subscribed to the doctrines of the English Church, and attended its service; they merely nonconformed to certain rites and usages. It was not long, however, before the idea of separation was entertained by some of those who revolted at the assumptions and customs of the church. A distinct community finally arose, styled at first the "Brownists," but subsequently, under lead of the famous John Robinson who went with them to Holland, took the name of Independents, and still later and in this country, of Congregationalists. It is now not quite three hundred years since this division of the great Christian family started out on an independent career. It has held a place and had something of a following in England; but the great theatre of its operations has been the United States. Here also it has had imitators, in the Baptists, Universalists, Unitarians, and Protestant Methodists, all of which are congregational in their form of government and mode of worship. So that the term "congregationalists," if used in its original meaning to describe a church polity, would apply equally well to all these other sects. But by the law which usage finally establishes, it has come to be a settled rule that the term "congregationalist," standing alone, shall mean a congregationalist of a particular theological cast.

The characteristic peculiarity of the Congregational churches is their form of government. They maintain that each congregation of Christians is independent of all others, and has in itself, under Christ, the sufficient authority to perform all the functions and fill all the offices known to a properly constituted Christian church. The Roman Catholics depend on the Pope for their authority; the Episcopalians depend on the episcopate; the Congregationalists are *in*-dependent. They believe, however, in the fellowship of the churches; and it has been the practice for those of the same faith and order to exercise a sort of fraternal watch-care over each other. In all cases of difficulty the counsel of other churches is sought, and the same aid is invoked in the formality of settling or dismissing a minister. But although it is easy for an outsider to see that this long habit of leaning on the authority of a council of churches has acquired the force of a statute or the authority of a bishop in other churches, the Congregationalists are careful to have it understood that they do not recognize any authority whatever in the acts or decisions of these councils. What they agree in or recommend has the weight of good and influential advice, — that is all. It requires the act of the individual church to give authority. If the church adopts the recommendations of a council of churches, they become law; not otherwise.

In this matter of government the Congregational

churches are in close accord with the town governments of New England, which are undoubtedly the seed of our whole political organism. Congregationalists are quite sure that their ideas of church polity are the source of the New England town-meeting, and so, not very remotely, the fountain of our form of political and national organization. But it is not entirely clear which is the model and which is the copy. Besides, our Congregational friends should be reminded that the analogy stops at a most unfortunate place for the support of their system, since the towns derive authority from, and are represented in, the State legislature; whereas, on the theory of Congregationalism, the churches do not derive authority from any source, nor have they any representative function.

But as it is their doctrinal system which now more than any other thing holds the churches of this denomination together, and gives them a distinct standing-place, I turn from the consideration of their polity to an examination of their theology.

There was a time — two hundred years ago — when nearly all the churches of this order were in substantial doctrinal agreement. They were Calvinists, that is, believers in the system of theology which that renowned theologian formulated, but under certain modifications, such as were given it by the Westminster Assembly in 1643. A hundred years ago this had in turn been modified by the

New England theologians, and had taken form in the Cambridge and Saybrook platforms. But through all modifications they retained the original Calvinistic peculiarities, of Predestination, Particular Redemption, Total Depravity, Effectual Calling, and Final Perseverance, — the Five Points of Calvinism. At that time, a hundred years ago, there was beginning to be a falling away from the stricter views of the Calvinists in some quarters; and this tendency to relax the old bands culminated a generation later in the secession of that portion of the Congregational churches since known as Unitarian. From that time all along down to this there have been two parties in this denomination, — the one representing the older and stricter school; the other, the progressive tendencies of the body. They have never harmonized any too well, and latterly there are strong symptoms of a split. This is indicated in the increasing number of churches that have, on one provocation and another, assumed independency, and in the well-known fact that there is a bitter feeling of antagonism between the more pronounced representatives and journals of the two wings. In fact, it seems to be the mission and destiny of the Puritan branch of the Church to be always bearing fruit that the parent stock disowns. And the reason seems to be that in this sect were attempted to be united two most diverse things, — a free form of government running to the very extreme of the rejection of authority, with

a dogmatic and tyrannous creed. The polity tends to develop individual action, independent character, and freedom of thought; the theology tends to destroy all these. Now the result of any attempt to carry fire in a basket can be surely prophesied: and this is just the experiment the Congregational churches have been making. The basket never could be persuaded to hold what they with such commendable persistency have kept putting into it. They should either have taken the fire out of their creed or put the iron into their government. Just look for a moment at the character of the dogmas the free genius of Congregationalism has had to struggle with. I will take, too, a considerably softened and modified statement of them: —

1. "That God hath chosen a certain number of the fallen race of Adam, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, unto eternal glory, according to his immutable purpose, and of his free grace and love, without the least foresight of faith, good works, or any conditions performed by the creature; and that the rest of mankind he was pleased to pass by, and ordain to dishonor and wrath, for their sins, to the praise of his vindictive justice.

2. "That though the death of Christ be a most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins of infinite value, and abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world; and though, on this ground, the gospel is to be preached to all mankind indiscrimi-

nately; yet it was the will of God that Christ, by the blood of the cross, should efficaciously redeem those, and only those, who were from eternity elected to salvation and given to him by the Father.

3. "That mankind are totally depraved in consequence of the fall of Adam, who being their public head, his sins involved the corruption of all his posterity; and which corruption extends over the whole soul, and renders it unable to turn to God, or to do anything truly good, and exposes it to his righteous displeasure, both in this world and in that which is to come.

4. "That all whom God hath predestinated to eternal life he is pleased, in his appointed time, effectually to call by his word and spirit out of that state of sin and death in which they were by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.

5. "That those whom God has effectually called and sanctified by his spirit, shall never finally fall from a state of grace; that true believers may fall partially, and would fall totally and finally, but for the mercy and faithfulness of God, who helpeth the feet of his saints."

Add to these the doctrine of the Trinity, and the explanation of the substitution of Christ — who was very God of very God — in the room of the sinner, and the unrejected teaching of Calvin that the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the impenitent begin directly at death, and are endless, — and

you get a faint notion of the strain put by the creed on the simple and loosely compacted framework of organization in which it was encased. With the freedom which all the members and every particular church enjoyed, to restate, modify, interpret, or reject altogether the creed, and in the absence of any stereotyped ritual to draw the churches into uniformity of services, and with the incentive to free inquiry existing in the very atmosphere of our republican society, it was inevitable that a large measure of individuality should develop; that while some would consider themselves set for the defence of the old form of faith, others would be driven to criticise and revise it; that some churches would reconstruct one article of the creed and some another; and that by these means there should finally result an amount of diversity and independence quite impossible to include under one administration. And the Congregational body is today a complete fulfilment of this prophecy. It is no more coherent and no better agreed in doctrines and policies than the Unitarian body, which by common consent enjoys the reputation of being the last and lamentable outcome of the Congregational system.

The wonder is, not that the order is so much broken up, but that it has so well held together. There have been two causes contributing to bind the churches of this denomination in unity, notwithstanding the seeds of division and disruption which they have carried in their own constitution. The first is found in the fact

that the Calvinistic system starts so many serious and intricate questions that the explanation and defence of its several propositions calls into vigorous play those qualities of the intellect which have ever been most venerated and admired among Anglo-Saxons, — the powers of induction and analysis. We observe the bent of the popular judgment in this particular in the homage uniformly paid to a great lawyer or jurist. He deals with a vast mass of intricate rules, established often upon principles diametrically opposed to each other, and related by the most technical and obscure threads of precedent. Now the ordinary mind, untrained in the habit of steering safely through such a crowd of complexities, is utterly overwhelmed by the mere thought of the subject; and when a feeble or unversed or half-bewildered advocate essays the task, they are more than ever convinced that the law is inscrutable. But when a man appears who can run the gantlet of all the subtleties and come out in a clear place, who fits together, by dextrous logical art, rules that have no apparent relationship, and who, conscious that he has no resource but to go by the law however far removed from reason and equity that may be, ingeniously contrives to make it wear the benign face of unimpeachable wisdom and unerring justice, the public respect for his abilities rises into a sort of worship.

Now the common mind was as utterly bewildered by the contradictory and irrational propositions of

Calvinism as was Mr. Samuel Lawson when he went to hear Dr. Stearns preach.[1] But when they heard learned and evidently consecrated men expound these mysteries, and by help of that never-failing accomplice of all error, a train of reasoning, make sense out of nonsense, goodness out of badness, and justify the ways of God, so dark and awful to the common intelligence, by showing how good it was in him to refrain from sending the whole batch to perdition, where they clearly demonstrated every mortal belonged, — they were ready, although the steps were still blind to them, to applaud the skill and accept the conclusions of their logic-weaving divines. You can trace the effect of this state of mind in the whole history of Congregationalism in America, in the literature and conversations of the people, and in the unyielding convictions of not a few of the church metaphysicians of the day. It served to develop, too, a long and able line of casuists, who gave celebrity to the Congregational name, and thus made it difficult for any member of that religious family to desert his own honored house.

Another thing that served to keep up the unity of the order was the rules early adopted and long faithfully adhered to, until they acquired all the force of a statute, in the examination and admission of members, and in examining and settling pastors. By these means a rigid standard of orthodoxy was

[1] See Mrs. H. B. Stowe's "Oldtown Folks," chapter xxix.

raised and kept constantly before the mind of every minister, church, and individual member. He might know well enough that there was no authority to make him bow to this standard; but the fear of incurring the odium of unsoundness, or of wanting the requisite evidences of election, overcame all other considerations, and impelled each candidate to vie for the reputation of unwavering orthodoxy. Being largely in the majority in all the New England towns, they made this sentiment pervade the ranks of society and even the halls of state quite as potently as the church itself. And to these causes our Congregational brethren owe their ability to maintain themselves in the vigor of their doctrinal ascendency for so long a period, quite as much, to say the least, as to all others combined.

Yet it is to be acknowledged that the Orthodox Congregational churches were never so numerous nor so popular nor so influential as they are to-day. They are not a unit in doctrine nor in usage, as they were once. They do not abide in the ancient faith, but are to-day much nearer the Universalists and Unitarians than they are to their former selves. Yet, individualized and unorthodox though they are, they flourish well. No sect embraces so much culture, wealth, and character throughout New England as the Congregational. It has established itself in considerable strength in all the large centres of the Middle and Western States, and its home and

foreign missionary operations, its educational and charitable work, give it a first rank among the great denominations of Christendom. I know personally a large number of its clergymen and authors, and it affords me a genuine pleasure to testify to their uniform high character. I see in the Congregational denomination the actual processes of that great and beneficent religious revolution which I am sure is destined ultimately to take place in the whole circle of evangelical churches. They were all originally on common orthodox ground. Some by virtue of close and compact organization, or by the repressing force of an unchanging church law, linger yet in the mere twilight of the new and better day. But this denomination, once the severest of all in its maintenance of the awful dogmas of Augustine and Calvin, has been so leavened by the free influences of its system of government that it has outstripped them all in its progress toward a rational faith.

I know what is still written in the creeds of many Congregational churches, and how recently a solemn conclave of their ministers went through the formality of reaffirming the ancient doctrines. But I know also the membership of these churches, I am acquainted with the style and character of the preaching they maintain and most enjoy, and I have long been familiar with every department of their current literature. I know, therefore, that as a people they have left Egypt and are far on their way to the

promised land. Where they will bring up I do not know, and they do not know. They have no definite goal. The future is all before them, and the logic of events is compelling them to move along, but to what ending no one can guess. I should not be surprised if another century saw them many times divided, and perhaps broken up into utter independency. For a sect that has outgrown its ancient creed and begun the dangerous process of moving away to more tenable ground, without having any distinct point of rest, is apt to keep on until there is no halting-place for it. The straiter members of the sect may, perhaps, say they still believe in the Catechism, and may affect to hold fast to that. The larger and more liberal portion know that they do not believe in the Catechism. At the same time they do not believe with the Unitarians or Universalists in doctrine, nor with the Episcopalians in polity. They are adrift. Their literature, their sermons, their conversations, and their half-and-half ecclesiastical policies show that they do not know where they are.

I presume, however, they have no anxiety for themselves, and it would clearly be impertinent in me to have anxiety for them. They have done much to foster learning, art, science, and good government, and not a little to deepen the religious sense of all our communities. They will continue to do these and other good works, I doubt not.

They will erelong have eliminated by a process of explanation and accommodation the orthodox elements from their theology; and it will be an interesting inquiry what their system of doctrines will then be.

V.

THE METHODISTS.

"*The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people.*" — DEUT. vii. 6.

THE METHODISTS.

THE sect of Christians with whom we pass this evening are emphatically a peculiar people. Whether we can go on to fill out the description as drawn by Saint Peter, by adding, "zealous of good works," may not be within my province to say.

It is a curious fact that in a state of society like ours here in America, where so large a proportion springs from a common stock, where all are acted on by the same influences of climate, education, laws, and customs, there should arise so many diverse, and one might almost say distinct, types of intellectual, social, and religious character. The Creator's love of diversity in particulars is not less strongly attested in his creation and providence, than his love of unity in generals. Viewed astronomically, the earth is one huge mass of matter; but viewed as a resident on it or an explorer into it must make its acquaintance, it is a vast and at first sight bewildering accumulation of substances, objects, and products. Every family is a social unit. Yet

the different members illustrate wide degrees of variation. So an American is, when met in some other land and among another people, so distinctly marked that shrewd observers rarely mistake him, however disguised. And from such a circumstance one would infer a uniformity of physical and social traits among Americans, such as we assume among the Chinese. But here at home we are, on the other hand, struck with the diversities among our people. In New England we quickly recognize a New Yorker, an Ohioan, a Western or a Southern man. And in those sections they pick out a New Englander, and even a Bostonian, almost before he speaks.

The same rule of orders and types might be traced in the intellectual and social gradations of our people, even in the same city or neighborhood. But it is rather remarkable how these differing types may be observed in the religious classification of the people, especially since we have churches of all the principal sects in every large town, and very generally they are made up of members from all the sections of the town, all the ranks of its society, and often the same family is represented in several different churches. Yet we note a more or less characteristic difference between the congregations of the several churches. They are persons of different style, taste, ideas, and tendencies. An Episcopalian is apt to have about him a certain consciousness of the merit that flows down from an ancient and

apostolic fountain. As to the Congregationalist, his Episcopal neighbor may quite outdo him in ecclesiastical airs, but nobody can be better aware that it is respectable to be Orthodox. The Presbyterian is only a more severe and mournful Congregationalist. The Baptist is likely to take kindly to Methodist practices, while he holds in aversion the Methodist theories. The Swedenborgian looks down on the whole company of striving sects from a serene height of undoubting superior knowledge and penetration. The Unitarian can with difficulty repress the conviction that Harvard College is the New Jerusalem, and culture the true Messiah. The Universalist is about equally distinguished for his theoretical ecstasy over the joys of the world to come and his practical affection for the comforts of this present world.

Now something of the hue which marks the individual members of each sect spreads itself over and gives a certain well-defined cast of thought, or peculiarity of administration, to the whole body. And so the Methodist Church is separated from the other churches, not only by its special doctrines and polity, but to the popular eye by its family traits.

I recall vividly my first attendance upon a Methodist meeting. I was a lad of about ten years. In the neighborhood where I then lived there was no Baptist church, — the church I was brought up in, — nor any Methodist church. There were, however, some families of both denominations in that section,

and each party was anxious to lay the foundation for a future church of its own order. Their mutual weakness rendered them mutually conciliatory, though I have the best of reasons for knowing that they held each other's doctrines in derision. It was finally arranged that the district schoolhouse should be opened for the use of each on alternate Sundays; and stimulated by the desire of seeing the house filled for their own minister, each party turned out in full force to hear the other. It was in the custody of two devout Baptists, one of them my aunt, that I went to this schoolhouse to attend my first Methodist meeting. I had heard much about the Methodists in fireside discussions, and was curiously eager to look upon a real Methodist preacher. I remember that the one who officiated on this occasion was a much more clerical-looking man than I had ever seen in any Baptist pulpit. Coming briskly in he went up on the little raised platform at the end of the room, where the "master" was accustomed to sit and rule the noisy urchins, of whom I was one, and knelt down for a moment. This unusual act inspired me with awe. Then he gave out a hymn which was sung, himself leading in a mighty voice, with an energy and freedom that almost appalled me. Rapidly followed the brief Scripture reading and the long, loud prayer, which was scarcely well under way before quick responses of "Amen!" "Yes, Lord!" "Praise God!" and the like began

to rise from the benches where the Methodist portion of the congregation were kneeling. I noticed that as the responses increased in number the prayer grew in volume and in rapidity of utterance, until towards the close there was such a tumult of supplication and ejaculation that in breathless amazement I turned to the face of my aunt to see how she was affected by it all, and possibly to draw from her expressive face an augury of its meaning. Her eyes were turned resolutely on the floor, but her face wore the severe aspect of disapproval which I had learned so well to read. I recall nothing of the sermon, except that the preacher appeared to be very "tonguey" as some members of the congregation said, that he pounded the Bible and the desk violently at times, and that he seemed to be preaching for ears far away.

Since that day I have made the acquaintance of my Methodist brethren in many different places and under great variations of social position and culture. I have found them much modified, of course, by these circumstances. But I have never failed to detect in them the same characteristic traits which impressed me with so much distinctness the first time I went to their meetings. No matter how learned, or wealthy, or dignified they become, our Methodist friends are relatively more boisterous, enthusiastic, and familiar, both with God and men, than any other people. It takes less to warm them

up and evoke their religious ecstasy than any other class. They are, apparently, more zealous, have a greater "concern for souls," and are capable of a larger outlay of physical exertion in behalf of their cause than any other sect. These peculiarities distinguish them in the East as well as in the West, in the North quite as much as in the South, in old England no less than in new America. On account of it they are the most contagious sect among the "common" people, and have the largest following among the comparatively unlettered. They will thrive where the Congregationalists can gain no footing; and their only formidable rival in the rural districts and in the country generally is the Baptist denomination, which, for different reasons, appeals to much the same classes.

When we look into the articles of faith of the Methodist Church we discern some marked differences from what we find in the creeds of the Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran churches. The one grand point of distinction, however, is the emphatic rejection by the Methodists of the Calvinistic dogma of election and predestination. The great battle on that point was fought out by the two parties among the Methodists in the first years of their existence. Wesley was the leader of the "free-grace" party and Whitefield of the election party. The victory fell to Wesley, who in consequence became the real head of the Methodist Church. I look upon the rejection of this dogma

by the Methodist Church as a providential advance from the old dead-line of rigorous and repressive Orthodoxy, to the new and more rational position of the modern Broad and Liberal church parties. It was one step, and an important one, towards what Matthew Arnold names "sweetness and light." It seems to be out of the question for any large portion of mankind to move at once from a lower to a very much higher level, or from an untenable to a consistent and entirely tenable position. A few *avant couriers* will go well forward and pitch their camp on the free heights. But it is useless to invite or adjure the whole army to take up that position. You may induce a division or a detachment to break camp and start for a new field; but it must not be too far removed from the old grounds. Slowly, and by squads, the great human army advances. It was impossible to bring Wesley over to the ground taken by Relly and Murray a little more than a hundred years ago. Or, if he had gone, he would, like them, have advanced beyond the sympathy and following of the great mass of his people. But he took one step on the road; and the interest and enthusiasm of many then, and multitudes since, went so far with him.

I have said there is a quite noticeable doctrinal difference between the Methodist Church and certain other churches, usually distinguished as Calvinistic. But I presume my hearers will say that so far as

their observation goes there is no marked difference between Methodist preaching and Congregationalist or Baptist preaching, on the point of election. In fact, they will say, election is a matter of which they hear very little in any of these churches. This is, I believe, quite true, and paves the way for the remark, that the Calvinistic churches very generally have in our day practically advanced to the "free-grace" ground of the Methodists. In common with them they now teach — although it is not often so written in their creeds — that abundant provision has been made by the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of all; and that the only limit to the acceptance and enjoyment of this provision is the willingness of the sinner himself to come and take it. The former rigid line of separation between a certain share of mankind held to be elected, and another share assumed to be reprobated, is now very rarely drawn in any of the so-called Orthodox churches. On the other hand, great pains appear to be taken to conceal the fact that any such line exists. So that to-day the differences between the Methodists and the other sects of the "Evangelical group" are differences of polity and of social and family traits rather than of dogmatic belief. It is somewhat with these two parties in the Evangelical circle as it is with the Unitarians and Universalists in the Liberal communion. Time was when there was a quite marked difference of faith; now they stand substantially

together as to the substance of their belief. But there is yet so strong a family unlikeness in the two that it is not much easier to make them affiliate in the same organization than formerly.

The history of the rise of Methodism is exceedingly interesting. John Wesley was the founder of the sect. He was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1703, and died in London in 1791. He was reared and educated in the English Church, and finally became a clergyman of that communion. But from his youth he betrayed a fondness for the pietistic ways of some of the sects outside, such as the Moravian; and very early in life he, with a number of fellow-students and others, came to be classed as Methodists, in allusion to the extra strictness of their life and the regulated devoutness of their religious practice. As a clergyman he was ill at ease in the Establishment, longing for freer forms and more spontaneous worship. He indulged himself in his bent in this direction until his ministry became distasteful to churchmen generally, and he was driven out, or perhaps I should say crowded out, though never excommunicated. He with his followers held meetings in an old and discarded foundery in Moorsfields, and here he organized a little church, the first seed of the great Methodist denomination, in 1740. Wesley did not, however, intend founding a new sect. He still belonged and tried to be loyal to the English

Church. On his dying bed he adjured his followers to be faithful to that communion. But events were too mighty for him or them. The whole tenor and spirit of the movement he had originated was contrary to the traditions and tendencies of the Establishment. In spite of themselves the Methodists grew into a distinct body. America then even more than now offered an inviting field for all new religious movements. Hither came lay preachers under the auspices of Wesley, and introduced the style of exhortation and worship that had already taken such hold of the common people in England. Hither also came that great competitor of Wesley for the leadership of the new movement, the marvellously eloquent Whitefield. And hither, although himself no bishop, Wesley sent Thomas Coke for bishop, having first assisted with other clergymen to ordain him to that office, that the societies rapidly forming in the new world might have the care of an officer of rank and authority.

On Christmas day, 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church, as a distinct religious organization, no longer leaning on the Church of England or on the Episcopal Church in America, was organized in Baltimore. Methodist societies were already quite numerous, but now the Methodist Church assumed its place in religious history. Dr. Coke was recognized by the Baltimore Conference of 1784 as their bishop, and Francis Asbury was by him ordained as his assistant in the

office. The organization then formed and still adhered to was modelled on that of the English and Episcopal Church, having bishops, deacons, and elders. Subsequently the order of deacons was found to be unnecessary, and was discarded. The Methodist Church has for its chief officer in each Conference — or diocese, as the Episcopal Church would name it — a bishop, whose business it is to look after the interests of the church within that limit. Each Conference meets annually, and was until very recently composed entirely of clergymen, under the names of travelling preachers, deacons, and elders, but has now also a representation of laymen from the different churches. Subordinate to the bishops but superior to the pastors are the presiding elders, who have each the care of certain districts. Once in four years the General Conference meets, which is the highest authority in the church, and legislates for it like a national congress. This body is composed of the bishops and of delegates from the Annual Conferences.

The plan gradually shaping itself in the Methodist Episcopal Church is, to have the authority vested in a body partly official and partly representative, — the Quadrennial Conference; to have as subordinate working bodies the Annual Conferences under the supervision of a bishop; to have still smaller districts under the care of a sub-bishop, or presiding elder; and to have an itinerant or transient min-

istry, appointed by the Conferences and holding their pastorates not longer than three years. I am inclined to think that this plan of organization, adapting itself to the church idea on the one hand and to the genius of representative government on the other, is the most suitable to our country and to the requirements of an American population. It has certainly proved in the hands of the Methodists a wonderfully practical and effective mode of administering the interests of the church. By it every requirement seems to be met; there is some one to look after all the interests and keep every wheel in the great mechanism in motion. By it all the material is utilized. If there are — as there are — men in the ministry who on account of personal peculiarities or lack of mental furnishing would be unable to secure settlements or to hold them when secured, they are not left to drift about aimless and comparatively useless as in so many other churches. But a place is found for them where they can fill a corporal's if not a lieutenant's position while the battle goes on, and thus keep the whole army officered and in action. If differences or difficulties arise, there is some one to come in by authority, and without bias adjust the matter. And what is much better, all parties, from the highest to the lowest, know just where they are and what they have to do, and to what issue all their efforts conduct.

While I do not greatly sympathize with most of the

doctrines affirmed by this church; while their family peculiarities are more distasteful to me than those of any other Protestant sect; while I conceive them to be better adapted to some grades of culture and some regions of country than to others; and while I am often shocked if not offended by a certain disagreeable mixture of cant and coquetry in this people, a union of saint and jockey, — I stand in awe before the magnitude of their work. I am filled with admiration of the almost uniform high executive ability of their bishops, who have as good a title to be called church statesmen as any that have arisen in Christian history; and I am not prepared to cast any slight on a body of men, however deficient according to my standards, who are so uniformly true to the great interests of social morality and personal righteousness as the Methodist clergy. They have become a great power in American civilization, and it is not a power that any good citizen has reasons to fear. Wherever Methodism prevails, it will foster the love of liberty, the practice of temperance, and the purity of the home. And it is not the least of its merits that it has the capacity to do this with a class of our population that most needs the cultivation of these great fundamentals of civilized existence.

VI.

THE BAPTISTS.

"*Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*" — MATT. iii. 5, 6.

THE BAPTISTS.

SPENDING an evening with the Baptists is to me much like paying a visit to the ancestral home. In doing so I return to the scenes and revive the memories of my childhood. I come of Baptist stock. An ancestor of mine, a Baptist minister, bearing the same name, was imprisoned with ten or twelve others in Hartford jail, in the Commonwealth of Connecticut, for the offence of preaching the gospel contrary to statute. My father's grandfathers were both Baptist clergymen. Among a wide circle of relatives whom I saw up to my fourteenth year, there was but one who had ventured into any other than the Baptist fold: and I remember he was looked upon almost in the light of a traitor. I was the first one of the direct line, and almost the first one of any of the branches, to wander far away from the fold of my fathers.

In attempting to speak of the Baptists, after more than twenty years of separation from them, I am affected somewhat as I should be if called on to talk freely of my own ancestry and my paternal home.

I feel that I know them more thoroughly, and understand both their spirit and their aims better, than I do any other people, with the single exception of those into whose fellowship I have been adopted. But on that very account I am embarrassed. There seems a certain betrayal of confidence in telling all you know of a family at whose fireside you were nourished and brought up, and in whose sanctuary you have enjoyed hallowed hours of delight. I recall, too, the faces and tones, and not a few of the words, of able and venerable men, mighty in the Scriptures, from whose powerful appeals my life caught something of its higher impulse, and to whose cogent presentation of Divine truth I am still largely a debtor. I walk, therefore, with a kind of reverence around the altar of this people, as it were a shrine of my fathers, sacred also in my own memory.

The Baptist denomination is the second[1] in size and in popular importance among the Protestant sects of the United States. It is also a large branch of the dissenting population of England, and has a considerable distribution in Scotland and Wales. On the continent of Europe there are about thirty thousand Baptists, found mostly in Germany and Sweden. They have large missions and a large aggregate membership in Australia, Africa, India,

[1] This is now a disputed point. It is probable the Baptist family is quite as large as the Methodist.

and on the principal islands of the Eastern and Western hemispheres. They are a remarkable people for their adaptation to different ranks and regions and races. They are a great power in London, having nearly one hundred and fifty churches there. They are strong in Boston and in Baltimore, in Montreal and in Chicago, in Richmond and in New York, in San Francisco and in Philadelphia. You will find them scattered through the country towns from one end of the land to the other, appearing to flourish equally well in Maine and in North Carolina, in Illinois and in Texas. They have more churches and members among the colored people of the South than any other sect. They have ministers of the most illiterate and primitive character, and they have those of the highest culture and accomplishments. In some sections the Baptist preachers pour contempt on college training, and pride themselves on their ability to preach without the aid of "book learning." In others they are the foremost apostles of education. You will find Baptist congregations that can scarcely be matched for antiquated costumes and customs, manners and ideas; and you will find those that are not excelled for style, polish, and progress. In fine, they fulfil admirably the spirit of the apostle's ambition in their ability to become all things to all men, and thereby make their way into all regions and maintain themselves among all classes.

There are some nine distinct varieties of Baptists:

The Seventh-Day, the Sixth-Principle, the Disciples or Campbellites, the Winebrennerians, the Christians, the Dunkers, the Anti-mission Baptists, the Free-will, and the Regular, called in England "Particular" Baptists. They agree in the mode of baptism, but differ in the method of construing the importance of the rite, or in other matters of doctrine. The Free-will, for example, are Arminians, while the Regular Baptists are Calvinists. The latter are far more numerous than all the others combined, and are the people with whose peculiar ideas and rites and work we are most concerned.

The doctrine that distinguishes the Baptists among sects is that relating to the ordinance of baptism. They hold, not only that there is no proper mode of baptism except by immersion, but that anything else is not baptism at all. Whoever has not been immersed has not been baptized, no matter in what church or under the hand of how high a dignitary. To sprinkle a candidate, or to pour water upon him, and call that baptism, is in their opinion as far short of the requirement as it would be to wash the hands and call that laving the body in pure water, or announcing the title of a discourse and then claiming to have preached it. Do they then, the unbiased hearer quickly asks, consider the rite of baptism a regenerating ordinance, as do the Roman Catholics, or essential to any one's salvation, that they are so scrupulous about the form? It would

seem as if they must consider it so, or they would, in common with most other Protestant sects, allow this rite to take a subordinate place in the means of grace.

By no means. Baptists are much annoyed to be so misjudged. They consider baptism an outward symbol of an inward spiritual experience; and no Christian sect is quite so particular to demand of the candidate for admission to church membership evidence of what they call "experimental piety" and personal regeneration, as the Baptist. This is, in theory, the indispensable prerequisite to the administration of baptism. So that they cannot hold to the saving efficacy of the ordinance. But this is their position: Baptism is the one initiatory rite of Christianity. It is the appointed door of entrance into the Christian Church. Believe and be baptized is the uniform requirement of Jesus and his apostles. It is not enough to believe only; it is not enough to be baptized without belief. It is demanded that we believe *and* be baptized. If this be the rule of Jesus and his apostles, it would seem to be the proper and necessary rule. If it may be deviated from, who will tell how much and how far? Obviously there can be no centre of union and no uniformity of fellowship except by faithful adherence to the rule of the Master.

If the Pedo-baptists reply: "We also accept and follow the Saviour's rule. We make belief the pre-

requisite of baptism, and we hold that no one is in full and regular communion until he has both believed and been baptized," the Baptist rejoins: "True enough; and by that admission and by your usage, you endorse the Baptist position. But your error is, that you name that baptism which is no baptism. Your philosophy is all right, being substantially ours. Now conform your practice to it, by demanding genuine baptism, — that is, immersion, — and you will stand just where we do."

The "regular" Baptists in the United States have always stood firmly by what they consider a logical consequence of their doctrine of baptism; namely, that they cannot admit to their communion-table, nor go to the communion-table with, those who have not been baptized, — that is, immersed. They may esteem them very highly, and may not deny that they are sincere and useful Christians. But in their view they are not true church members, and so not entitled to participate in that ordinance for which they suppose baptism to be the indispensable qualification. In this respect again, they contend that they take no different ground from other "evangelical" churches, — the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. These denominations have from the beginning been accustomed to invite to the communion-table "members of other churches in good and regular standing," — that is, persons properly in church fellowship according to their ideas of it; and

that has always included, and only included, baptized persons, according to their notion of baptism. They no more than the Baptists welcome to their table persons not baptized. But they allow that persons sprinkled or affused have been baptized. This the Baptist cannot allow; and so he treats all those who have not submitted to the proper rite as the Presbyterian or Congregationalist treats those who have submitted to no rite. And he says, "I am not a whit more 'close' or exclusive in doing so than they are. We stand on precisely the same logical ground."

It is, I think, in fairness to the Baptists to be admitted that the force of this home argument has been quite keenly felt by the other "evangelical" churches, and under the influence of the discomfort it has occasioned there has arisen among them a disposition, now quite often yielded to, to extend the grounds of fellowship. And we now frequently hear in these churches the invitation to the Lord's Supper in these broad terms: "We invite all members of other Christian churches, *and all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, to participate with us in this commemoration of our Lord." By taking this ground they escape the logical dilemma in which it has been the habit of the Baptists to involve them.

On the other hand, the Baptists of England now almost universally practise what is known as "open communion." That is, they hold to the duty of

Christians to be immersed, as the only proper mode of baptism and of entrance into the Christian Church; and to the extent of their example and authority they practise this rule. But they decline to make their conscience the criterion for other Christians, by excluding them from their communion-table. They invite Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and accept their invitations in turn, the same as Baptists. Here in America, also, the Baptists are feeling the inevitable effect of the now general tendency to discard as unjustifiable and puerile all attempts to erect a confessedly subordinate matter of form into a paramount matter of principle. The open-communion heresy is making its appearance in all quarters of the denomination. Able and influential preachers advocate and practise it, and the time cannot be far away when restricted communion must no longer be made a test of Baptist orthodoxy.

The considerations leading the minds of the Baptist people to this conclusion are the same that have controlled other Christians in reaching the like ground before them. In the first place, it appears the more improbable the more it is scrutinized, that John the Baptist or Jesus meant to institute a rigid and invariable mode of admission to the Christian Church. It seems obvious that the original intent of the rite of baptism was, besides symbolizing the individual's change from the old to the new, as by a washing from

dead works and sin, to commit him, by an act done openly and in the presence of all men, to the Christian cause. It was a public rite of initiation adopted from John the baptizer's practice with his converts, by the early preachers of Christianity. I think the weight of evidence goes decidedly to show that the mode originally practised in that country of lustrations, or frequent washings of the whole body in streams and pools and baths, was to immerse the whole person under the water. But as its purpose was to seal in an open and unmistakable manner the individual's discipleship, it seems entirely rational to conclude that any other form of administering it, equally suitable to that end, which the difference of climate or customs, or the convenience of the people might demand, would just as well serve the purpose, and just as fully meet the demands of that gospel whose great peculiarity it is not to follow the letter that killeth so much as to keep the spirit that giveth life. Accordingly it has come to pass, as Christianity advanced northward and westward into colder climes, and as freedom from the bondage of a stereotyped custom has gradually asserted itself in the Church, that other and less Oriental but equally symbolic and public modes of administering the ordinance have sprung up. It is felt universally, outside of the close-communion churches, and is beginning to be felt in them, that the argument from the original custom, and the

technical advantage taken of the meaning of the Greek word βαπτιζω, and the nice casuistry shown in defending the practice of restricting fellowship to those who have been baptized in a particular way, are closely allied to that straining at a gnat, and to the tithing mint, cummin, and anise, which Jesus himself so pointedly rebuked. So long as the public sentiment of the Baptist communion itself solidly supported the Baptist position, the close-communion dogma was a powerful help to the denomination, as all exclusive pretensions and assumptions are to any church. It fostered the pride of opinion and pride of sect which are so akin to family pride and pride of country, and fed the darling conceit of superior orthodoxy, faithfulness, and sanctity. It is my observation, supported by all the testimony I draw from religious history, that there can be no assumption too extravagant, no pretension too absurd, to become a potent talisman with any party so long as its extravagance and absurdity are not suspected at home. It is the unquestioned acceptance of the papal pretensions by the Roman Catholic constituency in all parts of the world for so long a period, that has converted what ought to be an element of weakness into a vast and magical instrument of power. But when the Savonarolas, Luthers, Abelards, Hyacinthes, begin to rise up within the pale, and especially when a large faction like the old Catholics raise their protests under the very shadow of the Vatican, there is the

beginning of the end. The assumptions and pretensions must be laid aside, or disintegration will ensue. So long as nobody but Pedo-baptists criticised the restricted communion position and the immersion pretension, our Baptist brethren rather thrived than otherwise by the wordy warfare they carried on with other sects on these points; but now that they have to meet the foe within their own fold it is a different matter. They will be compelled to do one of two things, — not immediately, perhaps, but within a generation. Either they must lower the peculiar pretension of their order and cease to make the baptism by immersion the rigid test of true discipleship, or they must be content to see their now united and powerful body split into two and perhaps ten parties. It is the ordinance of God in such cases, and the ordinance of a sect cannot withstand it.

In church government the Baptist denomination is strictly congregational. Each church is a little democracy by itself, in which no man is called master, but all are supposed to be loyally subject to Christ. Churches associate themselves together for mutual edification and counsel, but still jealously maintain their individual rights and independent authority.

When we are assured by the admirers of an Episcopal form of church government that this is the only polity that can secure unity of faith and cohesion of parts and wide and efficient concert of action,

and in proof are cited to the marked superiority in these particulars of the Methodist over the Congregational body, we should, before falling in rapturously with this theory, turn round and cite them the example of the Baptist denomination, more rigidly congregational than the Congregationalists themselves, yet as completely a unit in faith and order and activity as any sect in the world, and second only to the Methodists in numerical growth, and much superior to them in wealth, general culture, and cosmopolitan diffusion. It is unsafe to generalize on any subject until all the facts are taken account of.

The doctrines of the Baptist Church are Calvinistic. They have no common creed like the Presbyterians or the Congregationalists, yet their agreement in theology is quite as marked as the former and much more so than the latter. In common with all Calvinistic churches they are feeling the liberalizing influence of the Arminian or "free-grace" theory, and of the Universalist or impartial grace doctrines. But as a sect they hold closer to the ancient and awful dogmas of Orthodoxy than any of the great denominations; and on that account, as well as on account of their restricted communion notions, they repel many educated and liberally inclined people, who find a more congenial place in the Congregational and Episcopal churches.

The Baptists are particular to emphasize the fact

that they have been from the beginning of their history, and in all countries where they have had a name, the unfaltering champions of liberty of conscience. Roger Williams, the father of the denomination in this country, having protested in the Massachusetts colony against the interference by the civil magistrates with the rights of conscience of the people, and having been banished the colony for that and for other free talk, went to Rhode Island and founded a State, — which is the first example in modern times of a community organized on the broad principles of civil and religious freedom. It is claimed by Baptists, although the claim appears to me slightly mythical, that the constitution of Rhode Island furnished Thomas Jefferson with the model of his draft of the Declaration of Independence. Certain it is that Baptists everywhere have been noted for their love of religious freedom.

In point of character and ability the ministers of the Baptist Church have uniformly held high rank. If they have wanted the literary air and ecclesiastical manner of the Episcopal clergy; if they have affected a certain rough independence not quite agreeable to the Congregational ministers; if they have dealt mercilessly with the "free-grace" amiability of the Methodists; if they have been among the last to relax the stern face of disapproval toward the liberal sects, — they have been strong in the faith, valiant in controversy, able in the Scriptures, and

successful in their work. Their love of liberty and their independent habits have made them quite ready to hear new truth; and to this fact may be attributed the large number of recruits our own Church has received from the Baptists.

VII.

THE SWEDENBORGIANS.

"And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." — Rev. xxi. 2.

THE SWEDENBORGIANS.

THE Swedenborgian Church is the title I have given to the religious denomination of which I am to speak in this Lecture. But the members of this sect do not call their Church by this name. It is merely a popular designation that has attached to them in consequence of their origin from Emanuel Swedenborg. They call themselves "The New Jerusalem Church," and claim that their organization is the one prophetically beheld by the Revelator in the vision described in the text: "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." Their Church, they suppose, is this New Jerusalem, or tabernacle of God, established among men.

The closing or 12th article of their faith is in these words: —

"That now is the time of the Second Advent of the Lord, which is a Coming not in Person, but in the power and glory of his Holy Word: That it is attended, like his first Coming, with the restoration to order of all things in the spiritual world, when the wonderful divine operation, commonly expected under the name of the Last Judgment, has in consequence been performed; and with the preparing of the way for a New Church on earth, — the first Christian Church having spiritually come to its end or consummation, through evils of life and errors of doctrine, as foretold by the Lord in the Gospels: And that this New or Second Christian Church, which will be the crown of all churches, and will stand forever, is what was representatively seen by John when he beheld the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

This appears to all but New Church people a most extravagant claim. When the Roman Church claims to be catholic, or universal, its claim is supported by a history running through nearly or quite the whole period since the advent of Christ, and by an extension of its authority and worship over some part of every country and people on the globe. And when some of the other denominations, as the Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist, announce an expectation of absorbing or superseding all the others, they can at least point to their wide distribution, rapid growth, and great popular influence as in some degree confirmatory of their high hopes. But when a little handful of churches and

people, known in only a very limited portion of two or three countries of the earth, and having no apparent popular attractions, sets up the claim of being the Second Christian Church of history, brought forth to take the place of all the other organizations now and heretofore claiming to be Christian churches, and destined itself to stand forever, we are apt to treat its pretensions as quite too absurd to be reasoned with. It may do us good, however, to divest ourselves, if possible, of this unfavorable prepossession, and inquire candidly into the character and claims of this singular sect.

It is now more than a hundred years since Emanuel Swedenborg, the founder of the New Jerusalem Church, died at the patriarchal age of 84 (March 29, 1772). During his long life he accomplished a vast amount of literary and professional labor, and attained great reputation as a scholar and philosopher. His tastes and studies in early life were scientific, and his first professional service was performed as a mechanical engineer. He excelled in mathematics, and was fond of applying his knowledge to the elucidation of practical problems in engineering, finance, geography, astronomy, and political economy. Advancing from these labors, he began to write treatises on natural science and on the high themes of philosophy, occasionally making an excursion into theology. He appears always to have been a man of singular rectitude

of life and reverence of understanding; but up to his fifty-seventh year he seems not to have had any idea of adding anything to the world's stock of religious knowledge. He had become a famous author and a recognized luminary in the scientific and philosophical world. But at his time of life and with his training nothing appeared more unlikely than that he should turn out a prophet or apostle of a new religion. In this year, however (1745), he entered on a wholly new and, as the event proved, remarkable career, in which his fame as a philosopher was wholly eclipsed by his celebrity as a seer. In this year, he tells us, "he was called to a new and holy office by the Lord Himself, who manifested Himself to him in person, and opened his sight to a view of the spiritual world, and granted him the privilege of conversing with spirits and angels." This office was to reveal the spiritual sense of the Sacred Scriptures and communicate to mortals the mysteries of the spiritual world. After four years of preparation he began the publication of his "Arcana Celestia," which ran through eight large volumes, and was succeeded by numerous other works, longer and shorter, issued as he completed them, down to the year of his death. He also left behind him a large amount of manuscript, which was edited and published many years after his death. The amount of these religious writings would make a considerable library in themselves. They all relate to

the same general subject, and all profess to be given under the sanction of a special divine illumination. It is claimed by Swedenborg's disciples that every volume and chapter and even paragraph of this formidable sum-total of revelations is valuable and true, and that use for it all will be found in the course of the development of mankind and the progress of the New Church. But some volumes, as the "True Christian Religion" and "The Divine Love and Wisdom," are thought to contain the more essential and needful truths of the seer's revelations. I have not, of course, read a quarter part of Swedenborg's writings; but I have read the two volumes last named, and have been in the habit of reading the synopses and explanations and summaries of Swedenborgian doctrine that have appeared from time to time for many years. Whatever I may not understand of the subject, therefore, is due, I think, rather to the obscurity of the matter than to lack of information on my part.

If I undertook to set forth the philosophy of the New Church in its own peculiar phraseology, I fear I should make but slight progress in conveying to my hearers the meaning of this religious system. There is such a wearying iteration of "natural" and "spiritual," "interiors" and "exteriors," and the like technical terms, that most persons soon find themselves bewildered and lost. It is a fact that the system of Swedenborg demands careful study for its apprehension; and on this account many per-

sons discard it summarily, and many more, assuming that a half-hour's acquaintance with it in some tract or sermon has put them in possession of its characteristic ideas, make haste to tell the willing world how irrational and childish it is.

A few comparisons and illustrations may help us to an understanding of the Swedish seer's philosophy. All Christians agree to the general proposition that all things come from God. But their meaning in such a statement is quite different from Swedenborg's. He taught that God only is Life, while all other creations and things are organs and receptacles of God's life. Man, for example, is an organ of life, as the eye is an organ of sight. The life of God flows out and fills all organs and receptacles to the extent of their capacity. There is, therefore, no independent life in man, or animal, or angel. All life, whether in plants, animals, men, or angels, is the continual influx of life from God, the fountain. The effect of this doctrine may seem at first of no practical moment. But on reflection we see that it cuts deep and wide. If it is true, then the search for vital principles that has been carried on for thousands of years, and which, not being rewarded with their discovery, inclines so many to deny that there is any life apart from the organ, that is any spiritual essence at all, and hence that pure materialism is the fact, must be abandoned. Such a search is futile; not because the thing sought after does not exist,

but because it does not exist in isolation and independency.

Again, it is a doctrine of Swedenborg, closely allied with the one we have just considered, that the material universe had a spiritual origin. That is, the physical creation is literally and logically God's thought in form. It came, not from nothing, but from Himself. What we see, touch, and tread upon is the effect of which God is the cause. This is the region of effects as the spiritual world is the realm of causes. As science has demonstrated that the hardest and hugest mass of material is capable of being resolved into gases, thence into ethers, and we know not into what degrees of invisible and impalpable sublimation, so Swedenborg, reading the creation forward and not backward, tells us that the subtile and to us imperceptible essence of all life and thought is actually capable of putting itself forth in all the varieties of form and density observed in what we call the material or physical universe. The spiritual sun gives forth emanations, which pass successively through many stages, and at last appear a "natural world."

In harmony with these doctrines, and, perhaps it may be said, a part of them, is Swedenborg's theory of Correspondences. This theory is, that every natural object and organ has a spiritual correspondent. Within the natural world is the spiritual, within the natural body is the spiritual, within the natural sense of the Scriptures is the spiritual, and all the things

on earth have their correlative things in heaven. In view of the general sweep of his philosophy this appears to me much the same thing as to say that every effect has a cause. For if we accept his doctrine that the spiritual world is the sphere of causes and the natural the realm of effects, it would seem to follow that all these apparent effects must have somewhere their real causes.

The New Church does not accept the whole of the canonical Bible as the word of God, but only twenty-nine of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, and the four Gospels and the Apocalypse in the New. To the literal and fully inspired truth of these portions it holds with a firmness not excelled by any sect in the world. But when the Swedenborgians come to the interpretation of these Scriptures, their theory of an internal sense, and, beyond even that, of a heavenly sense, allows them a freedom of opinion in regard to the authority of the letter which but few professed believers indulge. It is in the interpretation of the Scriptures that the New Church divines and writers appear at the same time at the best and at the worst advantage. Historical difficulties, conflicts with scientific fact, and whatever wears the appearance of legend they easily resolve by taking the appeal from the natural to the spiritual sense. But when they apply this method of interpretation to all parts of the Scriptures, — as much to those that are not prophetical and figurative as to those that are, — their discourse

grows fanciful and often grotesque. Swedenborg went carefully over several of the books accepted by the New Church as canonical, and explained with tedious minuteness what the internal sense of all the passages in these books signifies. He also dealt with large portions of other books. His disciples, so far as they confine themselves to these portions of Scripture, are able to maintain a sort of philosophical consistency in their expositions of the spiritual sense of the Word. For it is true that there is a scientific connection between all the parts of Swedenborg's revelations. A comprehensive system of ideas and processes links all his speculations and alleged revelations in philosophical unity. But as he did not cover the entire ground of Scripture by his own expositions, his followers are left at liberty to employ their ingenuity on the remainder. This they do, sometimes with illuminating effect, and sometimes in a way that must make the seer, if he be one of their attendant spirits, according to the doctrine he taught, undergo an agony for which his system makes no provision.

Swedenborgians discard the name "Trinity," but, as I look at it, hardly the thing. In their view there are not three *persons* in the Godhead, but one. This one person, however, has three quite distinct aspects to man. For they hold that Jesus was, "as to his interior nature," the absolute Jehovah; and the Holy Spirit, or "Proceeding Energy," as they

call it, is Jehovah manifesting Himself in action. The difficulty of explaining how a being born of a woman on earth could be the actual and eternal Jehovah, they appear to think is entirely obviated by saying that this was the manifestation of the Divine Truth or Wisdom, — the form which God necessarily takes in unfolding his central essence, Love, as Truth. But the inevitable reply to this sort of reasoning is, that if Jesus was a form of Divine manifestation, then he was not God as a total personality. It is conceivable that He might have manifested Himself simultaneously in many worlds, as He did through Jesus in our world; and in a sense it would be true of every one of these manifestations, that it was Jehovah. But not in the sense, surely, that each manifestation comprised the total personality of God, so as to be properly described as the actual and absolute God. If so, then there may be not only a trinity of persons in the Godhead but an infinity of them, all distinctly discriminated from each other by their sphere of operations and their personal traits, yet all being one and the same person.

The object of the advent of Christ — which was accomplished by Jehovah clothing Himself with a material body and the external part of the human mind, derived from the mother — was to restore the lost balance of the spiritual world. The bad spirits in the hells had pressed up out of their sphere, and

acquired such an influence over the minds of men in the flesh that the tendency was towards universal depravity. In short, the hells were threatening to swallow down the earth and the heavens. To put back the evil spirits within their own realm and enable men to regain a heavenly tendency, was the purpose of Christ's coming, — or the incarnation. He accomplished this by descending into material form, and thus bringing Himself into close spiritual connection with imperilled men. By the same means also he came into contact with the very evil spirits who were luring men down to destruction, and by the power of his indwelling Divinity overcame them and drove them back.

The most interesting feature of the New Church doctrines is that relating to man's nature and destiny. In the sense in which the term is generally employed, man has not a soul. He is an organ of life, filled with life from God, and allowed to take on a feeling of life in himself. Here in the flesh he is a spiritual and immortal being as really as he ever is or will be; and the spiritual world is as truly here as anywhere. But man has an outward envelope to his organism, called the body. Within that is still another envelope, — the spiritual body. This is the receptacle of the Divine life. When a man dies, the external envelope is stripped off, leaving him still the same man he was before, his interior essence unchanged, but now seeing, feeling, thinking,

acting through his spiritual body, as before he did through the natural. The effect of putting off the external man is to exclude him from connection and intercourse with other material bodies and the material husk of the world, and to bring him into immediate connection with other spiritual bodies and with the internal plane of creation called the spiritual world. His moral destiny is not immediately fixed, but depends on the balance of his loves. If in his course hitherto he has been predominantly ruled by love of God and love of the neighbor, he will naturally turn heavenward, and by the help of ministering angels will gain complete perfection in love and wisdom. If his ruling impulses and ambitions have been sensual and selfish, he will naturally turn towards the hells, where are more congenial spirits, thoughts, and occupations, and he will find plenty of evil spirits to help him down. There are no torments in the hells; but all the evil spirits, insensible of their loss and misfortune, occupy themselves in such unhallowed pleasures and unworthy ambitions as their perverted desires suggest.

There is a very manifest tendency recently among the writers and preachers of this sect to modify the system of Swedenborg sufficiently to allow of as much opportunity of change and reformation after death as before; and some have even gone so far as to argue that it is not inconsistent with the great seer's philosophy to hope that all mankind may at

the last recoil from evil, ask and find the way out of the hells, and finally only the heavens remain to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

It would be interesting to trace the influence of some of the chief doctrines of the New Church in the literature and tendencies of other churches. It is undeniable, I think, that the more cheerful and rational ideas of the Swedenborgian philosophy have penetrated the minds of thousands of thoughtful men in all the churches, and inclined them to a better and happier view of God and man, life and immortality. Much of their philosophy is to me fantastic, and will, I think, at length be abandoned by themselves. But that they have contributed several new and ennobling truths, of the widest range and the profoundest human interest, to the world's stock of religious knowledge is their high claim on our permanent regard.

VIII.

THE UNITARIANS.

"*And the Scribe said unto him: Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he.*" — MARK xii. 32.

THE UNITARIANS.

THOMAS STARR KING, who belonged to both denominations, was once asked to explain the difference between the Universalists and the Unitarians. His witty reply was: "The Universalists believe God is too good to damn them; the Unitarians believe they are too good to be damned." I suppose this smart antithesis, like most others of its class, would hardly be found to hold if pressed to an application. In strict truth, Universalists do not entertain any higher opinion of God's goodness than Unitarians; and, in point of fact, it is also doubtful whether Unitarians depend more on their merits than do Universalists. But Mr. King's generalization interprets, as by a flash of poetic fire, the characteristic tendency of each sect. While they may be said to agree, almost to the letter, in the statement they make of the Divine character, it is nevertheless true that when they come to put the emphasis on the statement they select different points. Both affirm belief in one God, the Father.

The Unitarian, however, reads it, "*one* God, the Father," while the Universalist renders it, "one God, the *Father*." Again, there is entire harmony in the view and in the terms of statement of the nature of man. But when a Universalist takes up the idea of human nature as related to the subject of religion, he easily makes it quite subordinate to several other ideas. In the hands of a Unitarian, however, the fact of the essential rectitude of man's nature at once assumes a first importance. So we see that the brilliant and lamented apostle of a truly liberal Christianity expressed with his usual nice felicity the salient distinction between the two principal sects of the Liberal Church.

It is a well-attested fact that it is extremely difficult for a person or an institution to overcome the tendencies born with it. I knew a house carpenter whose proclivity as a boy was to use his left hand for his right. He began early to correct this bent of nature, and had apparently cured himself. But let him be surprised, or have a critical duty in hand, and the tool would pass from right to left by an irresistible suggestion of the still unconquered nature. It often happens that a man designed by Providence for a poet or a preacher is drawn aside by the lure of fortune, and passes his life in selling dry-goods or in managing a mill. But he will sometimes deal in epigrams over the counter, and interlard his invoices with moral reflections. It was the harm-

less caprice of the late N. P. Willis that he acquired some sort of distinction over the rest of his countrymen by dressing himself like an English lord, and affecting the manners and habits of a Briton. But the veneer was too thin to disguise the palpable Yankee underneath. You often hear people complaining of Boston that it is provincial and conservative, unlike New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and other wide-awake American cities. And sometimes well-intending persons, stimulated by sectional pride and impatient of the village habits of the New England metropolis, make a brave dash to put a Chicago air on the enterprises of Boston. But such efforts are not brilliantly successful. You cannot get the bald and spectacled old gentleman, who has got past his pranks, and who begins to enjoy a sedate respectability, to trick himself out like a dandyish sophomore. He smiles compassionately on the bewitched youngsters and lets them have their day. But his duties and delights lie in far different directions. Boston is staid, and careful, and venerable. It has grown so through the habits of two hundred years. Something may yet happen to let its Young America loose, and convert it into a fast and funny Western city. But if so, the Boston of history, the Boston of fame, and the Boston of our affection will have disappeared. Let us hope it may retain its ancient and honored characteristics, and though reproached as provincial and slow, may always be, as always it has been, the one American city whose granite peculiarities resist the lacquer of fashion.

The Unitarian body illustrates this law. It had a speculative rather than a dogmatic origin. It was itself the outcome of a long-accumulating tendency in the Orthodox churches of New England. No one person went out from the others, and setting up a new banner called for volunteers to a separate theological system. No system was framed, no body of opinion or belief was promulgated. Gradually a considerable party had developed in the Congregational churches which was inclining to freer speech, freer forms, freer thought than Puritanism had approved. The two points at which the divergence was most marked, were the nature of God and the nature of man. The caricatures of the Almighty in which Calvinism had indulged, and the monstrous assumptions of human inability and depravity in which it had delighted, were producing their natural fruit with the more cultivated and catholic minds. There was a steady advance of more rational opinion, a constantly increasing assertion of the Divine goodness and of human ability. No one knew to what extent this leaven had permeated the churches, nor would have known, probably, had not the controversy between Dr. Channing and Dr. Worcester broken out in 1815. It was well known that many influential and learned ministers were anti-Calvinists and anti-Trinitarians. Mr. Buckminster of Boston, Mr. Thacher, Mr. Channing, Dr. Ware, and Andrews

Norton, who as early as 1812 began the publication of an anti-Trinitarian periodical, were well known to belong to what was called the "Arian" party in the New England churches. But there seems to have been no intention to found a new sect, and no desire for it. Yet the correspondence between Dr. Worcester and William Ellery Channing furnished the opportunity for the ministers and churches to take sides, which they began to do; and in a few years a tolerably well-defined line was drawn between the Unitarian and Trinitarian parties. The preponderance of learning and of literary ability was with the new party. This drew Harvard College into their alliance, and gave Unitarianism a prestige in this country which it has never lost. To this circumstance, also, is to be referred the fact that the Unitarian movement became from the start largely literary. The most brilliant coterie of scholars and men of letters this country has ever boasted was grouped in and around the Unitarian secession, with Harvard College for a citadel, in the first and second decades of the present century.

You see this sect came into being in a way to escape all the usual disadvantages of sectarian origin. It had no infancy. It was born full-grown. At its very beginning it had numbers, wealth, high social position, the strength of eminent names, and the fascinations of the best culture of the period. Such a sect could not be aggressive in the usual

sense of new religious parties; that is, it could have no zeal to carry its light into remote districts and raise its standard among the common people. The position for which other sects wage fierce war for half a century or more, it had without striking a blow. It was at the top: what inducement had it to go down and wrangle with the crowd? It disdained the service. Keeping on the high range of its origin, it might expect to win to itself by the natural attraction of its superior position the intelligence and taste of the country. Its vocation was thus marked out for it. The Unitarian body was not to be a church, with an indwelling impulse to gather and assimilate with itself all whom it could win to its fold; it was not to be a great missionary organization, burning to communicate its new secret of quickening truth to all the children of men; it was not to be a school of theology, indoctrinating chosen men with its full and elaborate exposition of divinity, and depending on them to argue out the old and argue in the new dispensation. It had none of these purposes or impulses. It was a "movement," not a church; a tendency, not an abrupt departure; an ethical and literary culmination, rather than a theological principia; a rational overflow from the narrow-walled reservoir of New England Orthodoxy, rather than a channelled stream, starting from a distinct fountain and flowing with increasing volume to the inevitable sea.

Accordingly, the Unitarian body has never been able to effect any compact organization, nor to frame a creed that commanded general assent. Accordingly, it never could make of itself a mere sect, but has persisted in being a kind of ethical and literary club, the members agreeing in no one thing, except that each was at liberty to free his mind. Accordingly, there has been no definite line of advance for the denomination, and no particular stopping-place for any one. Some have not only not got beyond Channing, but have turned back, and now affirm propositions which he disputed. Some are particular to let it be known that they believe and preach universal salvation as explicitly as Hosea Ballou did or Dr. Miner does, — thus defying the cautious conservatism of the elder Unitarian divines, who were careful to keep aloof from the Universalist heresy, and who, for fear of being confounded with the Universalists, actually drew up and subscribed a statement to the effect "that the final restoration of all men is not revealed in the Scriptures." Others go to the extreme of the German Rationalism of thirty years ago, discarding not only the deity but the divinity of Jesus, scouting the miracles of the New Testament, and in fact all supernaturalism, as old wives' fables, and preaching a sort of transcendental theism, the effect of which on most minds is to leave them in doubt of the reality of a personal God or of any personal immortality for man. The Unitarian denomi-

nation presents the anomaly in the history of the Christian religion of a considerable number of clergymen preaching regularly to congregations, often in old and famous churches, and performing the functions of pastors in large parishes, who nevertheless are not Christian believers in any sense whatever, — have no faith in Christ nor in anything alleged to be divine about him or his religion, and are themselves undecided whether to think God is a myth and the future life a dream. These clergymen are uniformly men of decided ability, of high character, and often of rare literary endowments and graces. They are occasionally read out of the denomination by some indignant member of the right wing, and here and there one — like Mr. Abbot or Mr. Weiss — takes himself away; but the majority of them hold on to the name "Unitarian," to their congregations, and to the liberty of unbelief.

It is on account of the great latitude of opinion among the Unitarians, running all the way from moderate Orthodoxy in Dr. Robbins and Dr. Peabody to the baldest infidelity in Mr. Chadwick and Mr. Potter, that one finds it quite impossible to make any summary of Unitarian belief. It is easy enough to find out what individual Unitarians hold to, but no one is authorized to say what the denomination, or indeed any portion of it, believes. They do not, with a few exceptions, themselves make much account of their theology. They have much

to say about their "views" and "ideas," but very little about their doctrines, their system, or their theology.

It is obvious to me that we should fail entirely both in understanding the Unitarian movement in this country and giving an account of it, if we tried to measure and describe it by the rules applicable to a sect. There are zealous sectarians in it; men who love the name and cause, and who labor with energy and effect to extend and establish it. But as a people, the Unitarians are not so anxious to build themselves up as to enjoy the freedom of their opinions and the quiet of their own circle. Evidently we must take them for what they are, and not try to fit them into a place of our own making. They do not seem to be destined ever to be numerous, or closely united, or influential in many communities and with the masses. It looks now as if they would not perpetuate their distinct organization for many generations more. Harvard College is no longer of much advantage to Unitarianism; it is now the public's and America's to a degree that makes its service to a denomination secondary and incidental. The Divinity School, left alone, hardly has a perceptible, not to speak of a controlling, influence. The Unitarian Association is properly a bureau of liberal literature, and is altogether the most permanent and hopeful thing about the denomination now. But even with that the indications are not promising of

future growth and perpetuity. Viewed as an effort to found a sect, the Unitarian movement can scarcely be accounted a success.

But contemplated as a providential, religious, and moral influence, it has a prominent place among the most notable of modern times. It has given to the literature of religion the contributions that have done religion most credit. It has shown that one may discard all traditional beliefs and not make shipwreck of faith, — as such representative men as Clarke, Hale, Putnam, Calthrop, Herford, leaders of the denomination's best tendencies, happily illustrate. It has proved that Christianity is a reasonable religion. It has exposed the folly and wickedness of many dogmas that were formerly thought an essential part of the gospel. It has furnished some of the noblest examples of cultivated Christian manhood and womanhood the world has yet had. And it has imparted a charm to the study of religious science, by showing how even the most abstruse problems of theology and the loftiest themes of life may be draped in the graceful robes of elegant scholarship and made to consort with poetry and philosophy. Dr. Channing's discourses here in America, and James Martineau's essays in England, undoubtedly constitute an era in both religious literature and religious thought. The compeers and successors of these two have been worthy of them. To name the Wares, the Nortons, Professor Noyes, Presi-

dents Walker and Hill, Drs. Dewey, Furness, Bellows, and Hedge, E. H. Sears, A. P. Peabody, C. C. Everett, is to enumerate a galaxy of intellectual stars, all of the first magnitude.

It deserves to be said, too, for the praise of Unitarianism as a moral influence, that it has uniformly given men of character as well as calibre to the public service. No mere politician or office-seeker is a legitimate product of Unitarianism. The atmosphere it creates is unfavorable to the development of the genus demagogue. Sterling men, — men of culture, but also men of brain; scholars in politics and noble Romans in forum or field: the Adamses, Quincys, Everetts, Andrews, Hoars, and Curtises, — are its type of public men. In business, too, the Unitarian Christian is certainly not put to shame by either the character or deeds of his severer brother. It is a proverb that no good enterprise of charity, humanity, patriotism, or art has been started in Boston for fifty years without the generous leadership of Unitarian philanthropy and funds. In short, I believe when the whole truth is told and full justice done, it will be found that no religious body in this country, or in any other, has exerted on the whole a more powerful or a more wholesome influence on theology, on general literature, on what Emerson calls "manners," and on the whole upper ranges of thought and life, than the comparatively little sect of Unitarians. I feel a personal obligation

to them which it is a pleasure to confess. And on behalf of my own denomination, I embrace the occasion to say, that we have had a powerful, though indirect, help from the Unitarian body which has been far more important to us than we have always been willing to acknowledge. It has been difficult for the Universalist Church to do justice to the Unitarian, for the reason that it has always been impossible for the Unitarian body to do justice to the Universalist. The rule of Saint John, "We love him because he first loved us," has had a reverse operation in the relations of these two churches. When the Universalists were humble, poor, unlettered, the Unitarians were rarely conscious of their existence, and then only to join in reproach of the sect everywhere spoken against. If the unpopular Universalists could have had the moral support of their nearest theological relatives, the Unitarians, seventy-five or even fifty years ago, there is little reason to doubt that both parties would to-day stand stronger in numbers and influence. That support was studiously denied. The natural effect on the Universalist ministers and prominent laymen of that period, as well as on their immediate descendants, was to engender a feeling not altogether kindly. And when, later on, the Universalists having fought their way into wide public recognition and a position of assured respect, the new generation of Unitarians made some overtures to them, they were responded

to rather coolly, and in some instances rudely repelled. It is a shame that two churches having so much in common, and carrying forward the same work of religious enlightenment, should not stand in closer relations of sympathy. But it cannot now be helped. There is still a disposition on the part of many Unitarians to patronize their Universalist brethren, and there is the memory of the old slight, and there is the potent influence of family traditions and of diverse tendencies. But the truly catholic and Christian men in each can and will hold fellowship and work in harmony if not in concert.

If the serene and lofty spirit of Channing be permitted to acquaint itself with what is passing in the land for whose elevation he labored with such matchless resources of wisdom and foresight and eloquence, and especially if it may know what is passing in his own beloved commonwealth and city, I think he must have a pure pleasure in beholding how now the very sentiments he incurred reproach for preaching are widely welcomed all over the country, and nowhere more hospitably than in those theological seminaries and pulpits which sixty years ago accounted it a duty they owed both to God and to man to denounce the opinions and defame the character of their author. So the truth marches on!

IX.

THE UNIVERSALISTS.

"*Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*' — 1 John iii. 2.

THE UNIVERSALISTS.

AS I come to speak of my own church, the familiar lines of Burns run in my mind and so off my pen, —

> "Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as others see us!
> It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion:
> What airs in dress and gait wad lea'e us,
> And e'en Devotion!"

David Hume remarked that it is difficult for any one to speak long of himself without vanity. It would be natural that some part of this peril should attend the effort to speak of one's own family, church, or party. And, as a matter of fact, I believe it is quite widely recognized that whatever any one has to say of the merits of the organization he represents, is to be taken with some grains of allowance. Besides the natural bias one has in favor of the sect or cause that embodies his own beliefs, there is the feeling that it would be dishonorable to bear witness against

his own family, and the knowledge that, by a sort of unwritten but imperative code, he is expected to speak well of it, or not at all. It thus comes to pass that party papers and orators make a study of showing only the most favorable side of their affairs, and often they do not scruple to strain the truth in doing that. On the other hand, aware that other party organs make a point of concealing what is not creditable to their side, they count it a part of their duty to hunt up and spread before their readers all the disreputable things done, or alleged to be done, by those of the contrary part. It is obvious that nothing could be more mischievously misleading than such a party organ. It spreads before you each day two pictures, — one of which is an exaggerated delineation of the merits of "our folks," and the other of which is a one-sided and overdrawn representation of the wickedness of "our neighbors." Religious journals have less temptation to indulge in these luxuries of self-delusion and misrepresentation than political; and preachers are precluded by the nature of their work from running to the same excess of partisan extravagance as stump orators. But the infirmity exists here as elsewhere; and it is a rather rare thing to meet with a member of any religious body, who can deal candidly either with his own church or with another.

While not making pretension to be more than hu-

man in our virtue, it appears to me there are two faults we ought studiously to avoid. It sometimes happens that the members of a particular party or church fall into the bad habit of finding fault with everything and everybody at home, and, by way of heightening the effect of their criticisms, are forever telling how much better other people do and are. They cleave to the camp for some mysterious reason, but make it appear so poor and weak and mean by comparison with the camp of the enemy, that you wonder all the while why they do not desert and go where there is so much more safety, order, and comfort. This carping habit is equally harmful to those who cultivate it and to the organization to which they belong. It is a morbid state of mind, akin to that which makes a pampered appetite turn away in affected disgust from a table loaded with tempting delicacies; it is childish and wicked, and grown men should be ashamed of it. The other and more common fault is to imagine that all the good intentions, wisdom, and grace have met in our organization, and so, of necessity, left all the sinister purposes and follies and crudeness for the other party. We have no business to deify a mere instrumentality, like a political party or a religious sect. Our duty is to look beyond these to the uses they serve, and hold ourselves in that large frame of mind in which we shall recognize that all these divisions are matters of temporary human convenience, adopted as a neces-

sity of going forward by well-defined paths to a mount of vision, on whose summit the need of them will be past and the memory of them lost. Faithful to the light we have, and persistent and enthusiastic in following the clew it reveals to us, we are to be too conscious of the vastness of the radiance shed down on all the world through all the ages, to be carried away with the conceit that we alone are the people, and that wisdom will die with us.

The Universalist Church dates its origin as a separate religious organization from the preaching of John Murray, which was begun here in the New Jersey wilderness in September, 1770. Mr. Murray was not the first preacher of Universalism, even in this country; but he was, providentially, the one around whose preaching the elements of a definite Universalist organization began to take form. The idea that the human race is one in destiny as it is one in origin — which is the root-thought of Universalism — appears to have been entertained by some in every race where the belief in immortality has grown into prominence. It is a fact of much significance that the Jews almost unanimously hold to universal restoration; and they are positive that this not only now is but from time immemorial has been the orthodox belief of the Israelites. I met in Philadelphia an intelligent Chinaman, to whom I was introduced by a friend as a preacher of the view

of religion which the Chinaman had, in a previous conversation, professed. I found him clear in his own faith, and emphatic in the opinion that the more intelligent of his countrymen, of all grades and shades, were believers in the salvation of all souls.

In the early days of Christianity it does not appear that the question of human destiny was much debated. In the New Testament, the fact of a future life is announced as one of the peculiar and most glorious revelations of the gospel. Saint Paul, the great expounder of Christianity, often alludes to this pre-eminent revelation, and in two or three instances undertakes to argue and explain it in detail. But he never mentions it in a way to imply that some portion of mankind is to have a different destiny from the rest; while in his expositions he contents himself with showing that as all die like the natural head of the race, Adam, so all are made alive like the spiritual head of the race, Christ. He does not intimate that their immortality will prove anything other than a great blessing to all men. During the first two hundred years from the death of Jesus, his religion was extended well over all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. In several of the chief cities — such as Cæserea, Antioch, Ephesus, Carthage, Alexandria, and in two cities further inland, Edessa and Nisibis in Syria — schools of theology sprang up in which men were trained for the Christian ministry. From the records of those seminaries of Christian

learning, so far as they are now accessible to us, we learn that in a majority of them the doctrine of ultimate universal salvation was distinctly taught. Among the eminent representatives of the Christian religion that gained a place in the permanent history of the Church are many who became prominent in connection with the advocacy of this doctrine, from the great and learned Origen all the way down to Bishop Butler. Unfortunately, in a dispute which arose among ecclesiastics in the sixth century, the doctrine of the final holiness of all souls was reckoned in among the things that the victorious party — which is always the orthodox party — condemned. The seal of a Church council set against it, and enforced, as was then the custom, with pains and penalties, had the effect to discountenance and finally to overshadow it. It was not destroyed, however, although the darkness and cruelty of the succeeding Middle Ages tended in a powerful degree to obliterate so merciful a view from the regards of men. With the revival of learning, and especially with the advent of the Reformation, in which the principle of the liberty of conscience began to be reasserted, the doctrine of Universalism reawoke in the Church and held an increasing course in Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, France, and the United States.

One hundred years ago there were a number of congregations—like Relly's in London, and Mitchell's in

New York — scattered through England and America that lifted up the standard of universal salvation. But they had no relations with each other and probably no knowledge of each other. In fact it was many years after John Murray preached his first, and I may say after he preached his last, sermon in America that direct steps to form an organization were taken. During a period of at least a quarter of a century there was much preaching of Universalism, but little effort to gather congregations or to maintain churches. Universalists were very poorly agreed among themselves. In 1800 John Murray enumerates five different descriptions of Universalists in this country, and the impulsive patriarch's soul was greatly exercised for fear that the mixture of Calvinism and Rellyanism, which he held to be the pure doctrine, should suffer corruption at the hands of other preachers. At this time the Universalists were a sort of American dissenters. They were composed of intelligent people, belonging generally to the great middling class of the population, who had done with Calvinism and were waiting to see what next. The advent of preachers of Universalism sounded a call to them. They went, heard, assented; and if their leaders had been ecclesiastically wise, they might have been gathered into churches, and instructed in all the orderly ways of church life. But for a whole generation little or nothing of this sort was done. In my judgment this was a grave mistake. It was one

from which our denomination suffered, more than has ever been told, for a full half-century, and from which it suffers still. A loose, unorganized, undisciplined, undirected multitude, the Universalists had no positive work laid out for them, no standards to maintain, and no vocation but to oppose Orthodoxy. This was our church boyhood. The boy is father to the man. The unregulated, wayward, negative habits contracted then are not outgrown yet. It is to-day, after a half-century of effort in the direction of organizing and disciplining our host, much more difficult to accomplish a work of manifest propriety and utility with our people than it is with most other churches. Ministers and people alike contracted lawless habits. They began to question whether religion should have any organization, any rites, any polity, any order at all. It was a mischievous era for us. We learned the polemic art well in those days, but we neglected almost altogether the noble and refining art of Christian culture.

In the mean time the Universalist theology, which as I have said was without coherency or system, was taken in hand by a master mind. Hosea Ballou, for whom in the first years of my acquaintance with Universalism I entertained no special reverence, I have come to look upon as one of the great religious leaders and thinkers of mankind. With the slenderest stock of learning and the scantiest supply of literary helps, this remarkable man conceived and put

into force a grand and thoroughly compacted system of theology, which, with certain incidental modifications, commands the assent, as it extorts the admiration, of the wisest and most accomplished of his successors three-quarters of a century later. I do not believe full justice has been done, even in his own denomination, to this great man. He deserves, I believe, to rank with Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Channing, the most original mind of them all, in the great hierarchy of theological masters. He gave us our theology. He also first distinctly saw that we were called to be a coherent religious body, and undertook the difficult task of drawing the independent elements into some kind of unity. He laid the foundations of our literature, also, starting our first paper and our first periodical. From Hosea Ballou we do, in point of fact, actually date. He is much more the father of our sect, both historically and theologically, than John Murray. With him we begin to take our place among the recognized religious forces of the world.

Some of my readers are probably thinking it strange that I give such prominence to Hosea Ballou's theology; for they have been accustomed to think that his theology consisted in the maintenance of the doctrine that all sin and all suffering are confined to this state of being. This is sometimes called the "Ballouian" doctrine, or Ballou Universalism. But it is surprising, when one comes to read the treatises in which he

elaborated his system of theology and the articles in which he expounded and defended it, to see how little allusion he makes to this point, and how cautiously that little is phrased. I suppose his reputation in connection with this particular theory of the relation of this life to the next was gained while he was editor of the "Universalist Magazine," in which capacity he often undertook in a fatherly way to correct what he deemed the errors of his brethren. At any rate, it was soon known that he held this view to be Universalist orthodoxy; and such was the commanding weight of his name and the dread of being subjected to his remorseless logical dissection, that few ventured to broach the opposite theory in his neighborhood. But it should be understood that Hosea Ballou's system of theology — embracing his views of the Divine nature, of the rank and mission of Jesus, of the nature of man, of the purpose of the human creation, of the method of the Divine Providence, of the authority and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and of the destiny of mankind — remains intact, whatever view be taken of the relation of man's experience in this stage of being and the next. It is unquestionable that the denomination has, almost unanimously, repudiated his philosophy on that point. But it is just as undeniable that it holds by every one of the essential points of his theological system, and is likely to for an indefinite future.

As a separate sect, the growth of the Universalist

Church has been only moderate. It had everything to do in the beginning, with all the other sects a unit against it, and with unwise leadership at home. Then came the period of creating and testing its theological system. To that followed its educational era, in which it carried through the great work of establishing for itself schools and colleges. Then came the period when it began to turn more directly to the duty of effecting a thorough organization and developing parish and church life. The last two eras overlap each other and are still uncompleted.

What will be the success of the later attempts to build up a true and permanent Christian Church I do not feel competent to predict. I long for it with a great, insatiable yearning. I feel that we have the doctrines that commend themselves to the reason of enlightened man, and that are suited to man's highest and broadest spiritual culture. I cannot see why it should not be written down in the Divine decrees that a Church having these great advantages should be built up here in this free domain, to wax stronger and greater and more glorious throughout the history of the Republic. I feel that it would be a mighty promoter of the truest Christian civilization, a consolation to the bruised hearts of all the disappointed and the lowly, and a shrine wholly worthy the home of intelligence and liberty. But it may be that the unerring Wisdom has other designs. I see clearly that the mission of the Universalist Church

thus far has been rather to enlarge others than increase itself. Distinctive Universalism is only preached in Universalist pulpits and printed in Universalist papers and books, but incidental and inferential Universalism is now preached and published and sung, to an almost startling extent, in all the churches. The believers in the triumphant power of Truth and Goodness are not confined to any sect. It is wonderful how, against their theological systems, against the course of training in their theological seminaries, against the solemn letter of their confessions and creeds, against the oft-uttered warning of their most eminent guides, and against the narrowing influence of their revival machinery, the churches of the country drift steadily out into Universalism. If it goes on for fifty years to come as for twenty-five past, the special work to which the Universalist Church appears to have been assigned by Providence will have been largely accomplished.[1]

But whatever this church is to do or become as an organization, one thing, I think, is clear. It stands

[1] My full thought here demands the further remark, that the *special* work of a sect is not its *whole* work, perhaps not its most important work. The Universalist Church has the same warrant to exist and continue the work of Christian culture and nurture *after* it has spoken its special message and had it allowed in the court of religion that the Methodist or Congregationalist Church has. In common with the other churches it has a call to *be* so long as it has a work to *do*.

for the fullest and most rational gospel that the human mind has ever been invited to examine or the human heart to enjoy. Universalism, as hitherto expounded and applied, is without doubt incomplete and faulty. It will be better understood and more consistently set forth. But its seed-thought, — that God is the eternal Father of mankind, and that right and not wrong, good and not evil, happiness and not misery are the sure outcome of his creation and providence, — is God's own thought, and is as sure of the whole religious field erelong as noon is to follow the dawn.

I refrain from saying much of the character and peculiarities of Universalists, lest I might run into bias of some kind. I should hardly do justice to my own feeling, however, if I omitted to say, that, after having known this people in many States and studied them in many situations, I am not conscious that they have any defects of a serious kind which they do not share with the members of other churches. I have found them uniformly wholesome, honorable, trustworthy people, good citizens, sound moralists, lovers of sincerity, and foes of sham. I hear it said they are not so religious as some other Christians. I allow it. But I remember it was Saint Paul who said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too religious." I would have Universalists more like the man Christ Jesus: I am not particular to have them more like the men of Athens.

X.

THE SPIRITUALISTS.

"*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy.*" — Acts ii. 17, 18.

THE SPIRITUALISTS.

IT is the teaching of Christianity that God is a spirit, and that man, his human child, is also a spirit, who originates on the earth, and who, for the purpose of adaptation to an earthly life, takes form in an animal or earthly body. It also teaches that this earthly body is a temporary habitation, from which the spirit emerges when death takes place. After the death of the body it teaches that the spirit — though still more really alive than before, and though inhabiting a new body that has developed out of the old one, somewhat as the body of the new plant has developed out of the old seed — is invisible to the bodily sight and intangible to the bodily touch, because our media of contact and communication are these animal organs, whereas the media of the emerged spirit's contact and communication are spiritual organs. The one cannot translate itself to the other by any known natural means except by the transition which raises those of this lower denomination to the terms of that

higher. Death is the process which changes the mortal into terms of the immortal, and makes it possible for them to unite.

There is nothing improbable or specially mysterious about this. It is a clear and consistent account of man's origin and destination, and the mind has no objection to offer to it. Yet it may be a mere theory, an ingenious invention. Not everything that is reasonable is true. When we come to inquire why we should accept this teaching, we see that we must have some other ground than its reasonableness and consistency with itself. Granted that it is reasonable; but is it so? Is this the fact about man? What is the authority and where are the evidences? These are the inquiries the mind that has learned to think and to test conclusions inevitably makes.

As to the origin of man and his relation to the earth by an animal body, we can verify the Christian teaching very satisfactorily from our observation and experience. Further, the facts of life when carefully investigated and intelligently classified afford a great many hints and suggest a great mass of probabilities as to man's spiritual essence, and as to his existence somewhere and somehow when he ceases to be visibly alive here. In fact, the effect of a careful and candid study of the phenomena of mind in our world, aided as such study must ever be by the quick intuitions of our own faculties, is

to create a profound impression favorable to the truth of what Christianity teaches about the spiritual nature and destiny of man. Yet it falls short of assurance. To some minds, perhaps, it is ample to produce unhesitating conviction. But to many more, and those often of the greatest acuteness, it is insufficient.

To meet, apparently, just this requirement of definite authority and full proof, Christianity professes to come certified to by certain conclusive testimonies. Its Author and Founder was a man who held exceptional relations with the unseen. He lived on terms of professed intimacy with God and with the spiritual world. He was capable of bringing down from that higher plane of existence the forces and laws that obtain there into this, and by their manifestations on this theatre of physical experiences demonstrate the fact of a higher realm and give illustrations of its character. As the intelligence of man descends into the realm of merely physical forces and materials, and by its magical power turns them to products and uses their natural action would never reach, so Jesus showed how the higher than human intelligence of the unseen world descending into the plane of man's acts and experiences turns them to uses and issues which man himself without that aid could never attain. And to crown all, when the time came for Jesus to lay aside his animal vesture, he reappeared, and by many in-

fallible proofs authenticated his spiritual existence to those who had known him, as a pledge of the fact of man's existence as a spiritual being after he ceases to exist as an animal or earthly being. The proof of these proofs, the evidence of these evidences, is, of course, itself a matter of verification. And the writers of the New Testament recognize this by offering the fullest proof of the facts that under the circumstances were available. I cannot now go into that; but allowing the facts to be as alleged, it is obvious that the Christian teaching about man's nature, his relation to this world and to a succeeding spiritual state, is attested by the best evidences the nature of the case admits of.

Resting on these facts, it is evident that Christianity creates a strong presumption in favor of the truth of Spiritualism. Spiritualism affirms, as its special contribution to religious knowledge, that the spirits of the departed may and do hold intelligent communication with those still in the flesh. Intelligent Spiritualists, so far as my knowledge of them extends, admit that such communication is not common, nor in the present state of our spiritual education easy. They recognize the barriers between the two worlds created by the radical difference between physical and spiritual media of contact and communication. They do not pretend that the passage from the one to the other is effected without

learning and obeying certain imperative conditions. What they maintain is, that there *is* a passage; that suitably organized and instructed persons may find it; that many have done so; and that, therefore, the proof of the reality of a spiritual world, with all the unspeakable consolations and satisfactions it brings to the human soul, is a matter of present verification.

I presume most of my readers would like to interrupt me just here and inquire, Do you believe in Spiritualism? This is the inquiry I generally encounter when I endeavor to tell what Spiritualism is. And to put myself in right relations with my readers let me suspend the analysis of the subject long enough to reply: That I know nothing of Spiritualism except what I have learned from others. I have known and often conversed with members of this rather loosely compacted body for many years. I have been familiar with their papers almost ever since they had any. I have read carefully a few of the books of their best authors, and have examined a score or more of those written by men and women of less repute. I have heard numerous lectures and addresses by Spiritualists, and some years ago I was present at a number of test *séances*. But I never was witness of any phenomena that appeared to me to support the claim of Spiritualism. Although my personal knowledge of the matter is thus second-hand, it should be observed that my knowledge of the facts on which the supernatural claims of Chris-

tianity rest is second-hand also. Yet I am a Christian, and a devout believer in the fact that Jesus was "a man sent from God" to make known to men the reality of their heavenly Father's existence and his love for them, and to acquaint them with the way of life on earth and the fact of life in heaven. I have known men and women whose testimony I would take on every other subject without question, whose affirmations on this subject should be taken — if I were sure they had not been self-deluded — as conclusive of the truth of their belief.

Besides, I cannot overlook the weight of the fact that there are thousands of such persons, nor can I be blind to the force of a great mass of well-attested phenomena, which if it does not prove Spiritualism is certainly in accord with its philosophy. When, therefore, I consider the probability, on Christian grounds, that some intelligent intercourse should be had between our world and the world of departed spirits, in connection with the testimony of various kinds that such communication is actually taking place, I feel no disposition, as I know of no warrant, to deny it. I regard it as more than probable that some persons, perhaps many persons, have really had satisfactory evidence that those said to be dead are truly alive. I receive with caution all testimony on this point, for I have learned how easily men are duped by mystery, and how large a part a lively fancy plays in producing convictions to which the mind, and especially the

feeling, is predisposed. I do not credit a tenth part of the alleged manifestations and revelations. I know that much of the pretended phenomena is sheer imposture, and much more of it is delusion. Yet after I have made all the deductions demanded on this score, I cannot in candor deny that much remains calculated to carry conviction to unprejudiced minds. It is easy enough to put the whole matter aside by saying that it is magic, or electricity, or animal magnetism, or psychic force, or, finally and shortly, that it is the work of the Devil. But I believe it is not pretended that either of these explanations is anything better than a conjecture. If either of them is true, it remains to be settled by demonstration; and until the demonstration is given, we are at the same liberty to accept the Spiritualist's explanation as either of the others. So far as I have ever heard, the most important, because the most serious and carefully conducted, experiment ever made to test the phenomena of Spiritualism and ascertain their reality and origin was that made some six years since by Professors Crookes and Cox and Dr. Huggins, three eminent scientific specialists of England. They associated with themselves a number of persons of high character and intelligence, and proceeded to try, first, whether the alleged phenomena of Spirit-manifestation are real; and second, whence they arise. After long and patient experiment, with every precaution against fraud or self-deception, they reached

the conclusion that "many of the phenomena are real, though some are delusions and others impostures." On the question of their origin I believe they differed. Professor Cox took the ground, which a long series of carefully conducted experiments made with instruments of great ingenuity and delicacy seemed to support, that the force which produced the phenomena proceeded in every instance from the human structure, and could in no case be traced to any source outside of the living human organism. Whether it came from nerve, ganglia, brain, or from an invisible inhabitant of these, he could only conjecture. His demonstrations shook the faith of some in Spiritualism. But on the other hand they were hailed by others as strong scientific confirmation of the faith. In a case where nothing seems settled against the claims of Spiritualism, it seems to me only fair to allow that its own explanation of the phenomena is, at least, probable.

There are other features of Spiritualism which, I suppose, a believer in its facts and philosophy would make account of. It professes to give trustworthy information of the location of the spirit-land, of its climate, productions, occupations, and society. It would be natural to suppose, that, if Spiritualism is true at all, its value would consist and its usefulness be shown in the revelations it would make of the

society and scenery of the spiritual realm. I do not know how its revelations appear to other minds, but to me they are by a large majority, and I may say uniformly, very unsatisfactory. I have many volumes of these alleged revelations and descriptions. They are to me very dreary reading. They are so obviously fanciful, so crude and childish and ridiculous, that I am certain they embrace scarcely a grain of that wisdom which comes down from above. In fact, the literature of Spiritualism thus far is almost altogether chaff. Its extravagance and semi-lunacy, set off, as they generally are, with plentiful lack of information and of literary grace, have had more to do with turning intelligent people away from it, as from a fountain of madness, than all other things combined.

Then, too, it has been the fate of Spiritualism, even more than of any other system in its infancy, to be loaded with a miscellaneous cargo of "isms" and "ologies" representing every social and scientific craze of the period. Justly or unjustly it must bear the odium of all the adventurers, sciolists, mountebanks, and social anarchists of every grade of idiocy or infamy that have rushed pell-mell upon its platform. I am not so poor a philosopher nor so paltry a religious partisan as to maintain that the doctrine characteristic of Spiritualism has any necessary connection with these follies; nor do I hold it, as a religious theory, in any proper sense responsible

for them. I merely point out the fatal fact of their fellowship; and I am only exercising the prerogative of a friend in saying to the believers in Spiritualism, that until they organize, separate themselves from the motley crew that now overrun them and subvert their idea to all manner of base uses, and devote themselves in an orderly and serious manner to the exposition and diffusion of their special doctrines, they must give up the hope of engaging the steadfast interest or even the respect of truly good and influential people. We have too much pandemonium in society at the best; we do not want it to become chronic and licensed under any form of respectability. Spiritualism owes it to itself, and to the large numbers of cultivated and refined people who look to it for hope and comfort, to establish itself on some definite basis, proclaim its doctrines and purposes, and proceed in an orderly way to vindicate before mankind its claims to the respect and confidence of the world.

It is often claimed by Spiritualist papers and lecturers that the sect has several million adherents in this country alone. I have never seen the basis of these estimates, and in the nature of the case there can be none. There is nothing deserving the name of organization among them. It is impossible for the most persevering statistician to get anywhere near the facts as to the number of either avowed or silent believers. All that we know is, that in every

part of the country and in almost every community are some persons who are more or less accurately described as Spiritualists. This implies quite a host in the aggregate. But how loosely the name is applied may be inferred from the fact that they support only three journals, and these at a dying rate; and that their total force of regularly employed lecturers or ministers is less than three hundred. Until they organize themselves, neither they nor any one else can tell how numerous they are, or whether they are going forward or backward. It is certain that multitudes of people who once were prominent in this movement have subsided. Most of them have fallen back into other churches or into the indifference in which Spiritualism found them.

The effect of the great religious agitation produced by modern Spiritualism on the welfare of our society will be diversely judged by different minds. The zealous Spiritualist will tell you that it has emancipated thought, exploded hoary superstitions, extended the popular conception of the range and glory of the universe, and converted from the darkness of unbelief thousands who had no hope of a future life. The opponent of Spiritualism will assure you that it has increased infidelity and irreligion a hundredfold, has wrecked the happiness of innumerable homes, and made more insane people than all other causes. I do not accept either declaration. I believe Spiritualism has destroyed some superstition, and I am

clear that it has created some. I think it has brought a cheering light to many who sat in darkness and in the region and shadow of death, and I fear it has brought pain and misfortune to some. I presume it has made not a few "crazy on that subject," as we say; but I believe it is an unfounded slander that it has actually deranged more persons than are thrown off their mental balance by religious excitement under other forms of belief. On the whole, I am inclined to credit it with the production of much more good than evil, in that it has confirmed the general belief in a future life, and done no small service in dissipating from men's minds the cruel apprehension of a spiritual world of woe.

Spiritualism, we should all remember, is but another and colossal testimony to the old eternal truth that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things unseen are eternal. Our Bible and our Christianity, and the bibles and religions of all races and ages, are voices interjected into our world from that other world "that lies around us like a cloud." The Pythonism of old, the visions of the Swedish seer, the marvels of modern Spiritualism, are attestations to us who here are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were, that we seek a city to come, — a city where we shall not sojourn but abide, a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. For my own part the gospel is full, clear, and satisfying. Yet I freely acknowledge that I stand

stronger on the Rock Christ Jesus for the help of all the other confirmations of my faith, rising round me like a cloud of new witnesses summoned from all lands and ages, and though in divers tongues still with one accent affirming: "Though our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God."

University Press: John Wilson and Son, Cambridge

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